

MYSTERY:

A NOVEL.

BY FRANCIS LATHOM,

AUTHOR OF

MEN AND MANNERS,

THE MIDNIGHT BELL, THE CASTLE OF OLLADA, &c.

*"How narrow is the path of rectitude, and how
much may be lost by the slightest deviation."*

DR. JOHNSON.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED FOR P. WOGAN, W. PORTER, B. DORNIN, J. RICE,
P. MOORE, G. FOLINGSBY, AND J. STOCKDALE.

BY THOMAS BURNSIDE.

1800.

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MYSTERY.

LETTER I.

Major Seymour to Charles Melford, Esq.

MY DEAR CHARLES,

Albany, 178—

BEING at length become stationary for a time on the spot from whence I write, I once more address the friend of my bosom, in the hope of this paper reaching him. How long a time is it, since I have heard of your welfare! how long a time since I have been able to inform you of mine! and how much longer since we have met! Ought we to repine that the various walks of life in which men are fated to move, so usually separate, in maturity, the friends of boyhood, school, and college? By too many such friendships are made only the caprices or conveniences of the hour, and dissolve on parting, because they want the union of mind on which I have never doubted that ours has been established.—Next to the pleasure of seeing those we esteem, is the beholding their welfare asserted by their own hand; and conscious that you will not receive this with less ardour than I write it, I feel delight at this moment almost
B amounting

amounting to what I should experience on seeing you. I do not doubt that you have written to me, and often too; but it is now nearly eighteen months since I have received a letter of yours, and no wonder; could you see how we are harassed from place to place, what scenes of confusion our almost daily battles or skirmishes occasion, how each is employed in providing for his own necessities, you would cease to be surprised, as I do, that we are cut off from intelligence with our friends in England. I am a soldier, and dare affirm that no tongue, except that of malice or injustice, can accuse me of ever having flinched when opposed to the enemies of my country; but still I may say in secret to my friend, that there is no greater curse, either to an individual or a country, than war; whether it be offensive or defensive, the effects are the same: I am not speaking particularly of the one in which we are engaged, I speak of war as a general evil: if it weighs down the individual with taxes levied for its support, the same cause naturally weakens the finances of the country; and trivial are these ills, if we turn our thoughts for an instant to the miseries of the field of battle, and the breaking hearts of those who mourn the fallen. Those days are happily gone by, when every tender feeling was sacrificed to patriotism; the hearts of parents are now no longer insensible to the sufferings of their sons, when fighting against the enemies of their country; wives now no longer rejoice that their children are fatherless, because their husbands have died in warfare: and however this unnatural stoicism may be applauded by those who inflame nations to meet each other, determined on the destruction of their species, I think what they would style the weaker feelings, are the nobler; in them humanity appears to gain



gain ground, and through them a greater share of tranquillity may be happily promoted in the globe. Why have the qualities of humanity and benevolence been implanted in our breasts? why have they been taught to us as pre-eminent virtues? Surely not that we should use our endeavours to smother them.

You know the army was never my choice; indeed you know also that my father made me understand that younger sons have no right of choice: I had no alternative, but my profession, or being cast off by him: he is now no more, and when peace shall be granted us, I shall immediately sell out. You cannot imagine the sensations attending upon the expectation of day-break, when we know that the sun is to rise upon a field of slaughter: Good God! what have been my feelings, when stretched upon the floor of my tent, unable to sleep, I have reflected that on the following morning I must give an order to kill my fellow-creatures, or be stigmatised with the brand of infamy in my native country; nay, that I must myself raise a sword against their lives! I have often tried to persuade myself, that it was in my own defence in which I was compelled thus to act; but conscience always started up to enquire, whether I had not voluntarily entered upon the mode of life in which this conduct was necessary? One idea only afforded me consolation; it was this: "If I die to-morrow," I said, "I forgive my murderer, for he will not attack me as an individual: if my sword give death to an enemy, may the forgiveness with which I have prepared myself to meet the blow from him, plead my pardon on high!"

If I had any thing else than my own thoughts to entertain you with, I would not obtrude upon you these reflections; but of what is passing here

you probably know more particulars than myself. Write to me as soon as you shall receive this, and direct for me at General R——'s, and I think I can ensure its not miscarrying.

Farewell, dear Charles, I have not time to write long letters. I need not repeat, that to hear you are well and happy is always the greatest pleasure of,

Yours sincerely, &c.

GEORGE SEYMOUR.



LETTER II.

Charles Melford, Esq. to Major Seymour.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Melford-house, Rutlandshire.

A FRIEND alone can conceive the delight with which I yesterday received your letter dated from Albany. Not a day, nay hardly an hour, has lately passed in which I have not been endeavouring to gain some intelligence of you; and though I have found so many others in my situation of ignorance relative to their friends, I have ever trembled to examine the returns of battle. Accustomed to lay my heart before you in full and open confidence, I have felt a want of zest for my pleasures, and a vacancy in every circumstance which has occurred to me, for want of being able to impart it to you; but knowing you to be still in existence, I again feel re-assured and happy. Oh, Seymour, I have never stood in so great
need

need of the bosom of friendship to repose my secrets upon as I have done during the interval of silence which has, from necessity, subsisted between us. The strangest and happiest of adventures has occurred to me. I have a long story to unfold to you, and the instant I know where to address you, I cannot forbear beginning it. Seymour, I have seen the woman with whom the future destiny of my life is woven;—I have seen the woman with whom, were all my dependence in life placed in myself only, I would connect myself to-morrow, nor doubt that every happiness which can bless the married state would crown our union. An opportunity like the present of addressing you may not readily present itself again; I will therefore use the one in my power to give you a full detail of circumstances, of which I need not admonish you to give me your candid opinion. Before I come to a relation of facts, suffer me to dwell a short time on a few considerations which ought first to be made clear to you, and without keeping which in view, you will not see and feel exactly as I have done, and of course will not be so well able to decide with justice and accuracy upon the point in question. You know that I am an only son; and that since my leaving Cambridge, I have lived, agreeably to his wish, with my father, Sir Edmund Melford, who is a widower at the advanced age of seventy-two. Of Sir Edmund you have seen but little, and then only on the terms of formal acquaintance as my friend, or in mixed company: those are not the times to learn a man's character; Sir Edmund's hand and joke are then ready for every one—he is the pleasant companion, and his age gains him respect; it is in private in his own family that a man must be seen to be thoroughly understood; and here Sir Edmund is more severe, more contracted in his opinions

nions than I am often willing to believe it can be in the nature of my father to be. I feel my own heart open and benevolent towards all mankind ; some I particularly select as I judge them most worthy my esteem, but I despise none. My father respects only as he esteems the rank of those he respects deserving his approbation, acknowledges no virtue so great as primogeniture, and considers excellence in poverty the most contemptible of vices. He was himself an elder son, and inherited the title which I am one day to bear before he became of age ; his mother was the widow of a bishop, with whom his father fell in love ; she had herself been educated in all the formal aristocracy of the old school, and being left the sole manager of her son by the sudden death of her husband, she succeeded in giving him the same ideas under which she had herself been brought up. My father thus instructed, had been particularly cautioned by my grandmother never to marry, till he could connect himself with a woman of rank : he did not marry till late in life : my mother was the youngest daughter of a duke ; she brought him a very slender fortune, and gave birth to myself before the expiration of the first year after their marriage, and at the conclusion of the second she died. Sir Edmund has since that time made no attempt to alter his situation, and the greatest object of his present pride and attention is a rich bisected monument erected in the church which stands on his estate ; one side of it contains the genealogy of my deceased mother, the other his own, blank spaces being left in the slab to be filled up with his age and the date of his death. In these ideas my father has endeavoured to educate me : I do not blame him for it, because custom has taught him to believe them consistent with my situation ; but I am extremely thankful for the powers

powers nature has given me, of discriminating
 with greater accuracy between the various shades
 of merit than the steps of birth. My years of
 boyhood were tinted with this aristocratic spirit, *(tainted?)*
 which so violently ferments the blood of Sir Ed-
 mund; and it was no matter of surprise, that I
 then felt as he did, because I was taught by him
 to look up to no one else as having authority over
 me, and it was but natural at those years for me
 to imagine, that the possessing of authority, and
 the right of possessing it, were the same thing. I
 had then very few acquaintance, indeed no inti-
 mate ones, for almost every body I knew was de-
 scribed to me as beneath my friendship; my mind
 was active, and of course dissatisfied that almost
 every pleasure I enjoyed was corporeal; and hav-
 ing no one to converse with, I began to acquire
 a liking for reading; and happily for me, my fa-
 ther had a good library, though he was little in
 the habit of disturbing its order himself. After I
 had some time acquired this taste, I gained the
 happier quality of reflecting. The first idea which
 told me that I thought at all, was a wish to learn
 the histories of those men whose works best pleased
 me. Many of the books I had already read had
 taught me the insignificance of human greatness,
 and the inestimable worth of virtue and know-
 ledge; and when I began my biographical reading
 and found that most, nay almost all of those men
 whose works held the first place in my opinion,
 were such as my father would have despised as
 his inferiors both in fortune and rank, I could not
 forbear immediately reflecting what exquisite folly
 it was for any one to pride himself on possessing a
 name of grandeur, and a certain portion of land,
 and to consider himself superior to those men who
 possessed abilities for instructing him how to bear
 them to his own advantage in the world. At this
 first

first dawning of my sense I was twelve years old ;
 my father had till this period instructed me him-
 self in the first branches of common knowledge,
 and I was in the successive year sent to Winches-
 ter. Here, Seymour, commenced my friend-
 ship with you, which I hope neither time nor cir-
 cumstance will ever be able to dissolve. When you
 entered the army I became a student at Cam-
 bridge ; I have now left the University three
 years, and I am not conscious of having once of-
 fended my father by opposing to his ideas of birth
 my principles of common sense. Infirmities—for
 there are such of the judgment as well as of the
 body, and I wish to call my father's prejudice in
 favour of rank by no severer name—strengthen
 with the years of those whose minds they inhabit ;
 and the temper of Sir Edmund being thus ex-
 plained, if I were to marry during his life-time,
 what must the woman be with whom I should
 have his consent to connect myself ? I answer
 that the woman herself would not be considered
 by him at all ; the eligibility of the union would
 with him depend upon what title her grandfather
 had handed down to her progenitor. What would
 be the woman whom Charles Melford would se-
 lect to bless his marriage bed ? A woman who
 would love him as a man, not as a baronet : in
 that sentence, Seymour, I think I convey to you
 the whole of my heart ; you doubtless see in it,
 attributed to the woman whom I could love, the
 truth of innocence playing about eyes whose gentle
 fire is lighted at a heart secure in itself from the
 want of design which marks its own actions, and
 embellished by the roses of a face exquisite in feel-
 ing simplicity. Such a woman I have seen ; the
 love of such a woman, as the reward of my en-
 deavouring to merit it, I look forward to receive
 from Heaven as the blessing of my present life,
 and

and earnest of my bliss in futurity ; for, oh, Seymour, he who has been once blessed with the charms of this divine girl, must taste eternal felicity ; for, once connected with her, the angelic purity of her heart must defend him from the commission of any act by which it might be forfeited. Oh, surely, if there is a middle state between the cares of this life and future happiness, I shall bask in it when united to Margaretta, for to possess her charms must be a superior pleasure to any one this world can bestow. Margaretta ! You have her name, but oh it is an indistinct idea of what she is, unworthy of the form that bears it. I do not yet call her my Margaretta, for she knows me only yet as her friend, nor shall do till—I have no one to question my right of making her mine. My heart is firm towards her—immoveable from Margaretta ; but so many unforeseen occurrences spring up to thwart our favourite schemes, that I have resolved not to declare what I feel for her till I have the liberty of offering her my hand without offence to him whom I shall ever consider it my duty not to insult by a disregard of what he esteems so sacred an observation. Margaretta is but a poor cottager's daughter, uneducated, but in virtue ; unadorned, but by the interesting simplicity of unconscious beauty. Oh ! with what pleasure shall I cultivate the mind of innocence into the practice of those virtues which now lie dormant in her heart—draw into perfection those seeds of knowledge which yet want the ripening sun of instruction ! Oh ! what scenes of future happiness have I pictured to myself in the friendship of my Seymour, and the love of Margarretta ! But I have not yet told you by what means I know her ; my paper is full, another sheet shall be dedicated to the relation.

Adieu, yours, &c.

CHARLES MELFORD

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dotatissima
forma*

LETTER III.

Charles Melford, Esq. in continuation.

IT is now about seven months since, as I was one day following the hounds, the strap of one of my stirrups happening to snap, I was obliged to stop my horse and dismount in order to endeavour to repair it; this I after some time contrived to do, but the dogs and my companions were out of sight before I had effected it: I again mounted my horse, and while riding about in the hope of rejoining them, I met in a cross lane, which divides two high roads—I met Margaretta; in one hand she held that of a little boy, and in the other a basket of fruit; a large straw hat concealed her face, and I saw not her beauty, till enquiring of her, “Whether she had seen the hounds?” she fixed upon me, as she answered me, a pair of eyes which pierced to my very soul. “I have not seen them, sir,” was her answer, and she walked on. I had stopped my horse, and I remained some minutes looking after her without remembering why I had stopped it, only recollecting that I had seen her countenance. Without being resolved to follow her, I walked my horse after her: she had crossed another lane, and was just arrived on a little green, skirted with cottages, when I came within sight of her; she entered a neat dwelling, which stood about one hundred yards distant from the rest: I advanced towards it, stopped opposite to it, and that instant I heard the cry of the dogs; I know not why, but I immediately rode to them. I returned home;

home; I thought of little else but this beautiful rustic: purity of heart was stamped on her countenance: seduction I had ever abhorred, as the most criminal and meanest of vices, and yet I resolved to see her again. The green on which the house stands that I had seen her enter is about sixteen miles from hence.

A few days after, I mounted my shooting poney, took my dogs and gun, and went out with the rising of the sun. I killed a few birds, put them into my bag, and immediately rode towards the green: arrived there, I went strait to the cottage, and knocked with my whip upon the door; it was opened by an old man, who, with a courteous nod, enquired my business; I told him, that I requested the favour of being shown a house where I could get some bread and cheese and ale, or if he would give me a draught that I would pay him for it: he answered me civilly, that I was welcome to such as he had, and asked me to alight and walk in: to this I wanted little persuasion, and directly followed him into a neat kitchen;—he desired me to sit by the fire while he went to draw the ale. When alone, I looked round for Margaretta: a door, the upper half of which was a window, opened at one end of the kitchen into a small room; I walked towards it, in the hope of there seeing Margaretta: the old man returned while I stood before it: “I would have shown you in there, sir,” said he, “but there is no fire.” I seated myself by the chimney, and my first draught was just ended, when Margaretta came in from a little garden behind the house; she courtseyed to me, and I believe I felt at that moment more awkward than I ever did in a drawing-room. “This is the gentleman, father,” said Margaretta, “that asked me, last Monday morning, if I had seen the hounds—

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Did you find them, pray, sir?" I answered, "Yes, I am *very* much obliged to *you*." This was a very foolish answer, as you perceive: Margaretta returned it with a smile, which I thought seemed to say, "How are you obliged to me for it?" The old man looked first at me, then at her. I soon learnt that the divine girl's name was Margaretta, and that of the old man Hayton. After some conversation, restrained indeed by my confusion, and the ignorance of those with whom I conversed concerning me, I arose to depart, presented Margaretta with some birds from my bag, and offered to make Hayton a compensation for my ale; this he refused to take, and I invited myself to come a second time, saying, that as I encreased my expence, he might become willing to accept a return from me. I often repeated my visit, and found old Hayton cool, though civil, and Margaretta apparently reserved through restraint. I learnt that the old man had rented a small farm some years ago in the village in which he still lived, and that his only son's extravagance had driven him to difficulties; that this son had since gone, in a very low capacity, into the army; and that Hayton, at the expiration of the lease of his farm, which had been ended about four years, had refused to renew it, being rendered unable by the sorrows that had oppressed him for undergoing the requisite labour of superintending it, and that he had accordingly sold off his stock, and retired with Margaretta upon the small remains of property he possessed.

About two months after my first visit—and I never ventured to call above once a fortnight—I went one day and happened to find Margaretta at home alone: I had long carried about with me a trinket of value, which I wished to present to her,
but

but had hesitated on what plea to do it; and now, *pretence* on our being alone, I took it from my pocket, and asked her to wear it for my sake. "What am I to call it," said she, "to my father?" I answered, "The gift of a friend, who considers himself under obligations to you and your father, which he knows not how otherwise to repay." She courtseyed with a smile, and hung it round her neck. I sat that day longer at the cottage than I had ever done before, and at parting shook hands with Margaretta for the first time. Having touched the hand of Margaretta, I felt the glow of her palm upon mine; my fingers still tingled as if her's were tenderly drawing over them in the parting of our hands, and the fire of love burnt stronger than ever in my breast. The next time I went, Hayton was alone in the kitchen, from accident I supposed on entering, but the graveness of his deportment seemed in a very few moments to explain to me that it was from design Margaretta was not present. I soon enquired for her, and the old man answered, "She is very well; I have a message to you, sir, from her; she requests that you will do her the favour of taking back this trinket, with which you presented her last week." I stared as he held it out to me, undetermined what I ought to say; he continued, on seeing me silent, "Do not think it any disrespect, sir, of Margaretta, that she does not wear it; it was I who requested that she would not."—"What could be your reason?" I asked. "Sir," replied Hayton, "the distance at which Margaretta stands from you in point of situation—for I know you, sir—must make her appear either foolishly arrogant or mercenarily weak while she wears this; she received it unguardedly, and desired I would point out to you her conviction of the error she had committed."

ted."—"Indeed," I returned, conscious of my own justifiable intentions, yet feeling it inconsistent with the plan I had laid down for my conduct during the life of my father to explain them, "indeed it was no error." Hayton looked at me as uncertain of what I meant, then said, "There can be no error in her not wearing it." I found he looked upon me with suspicion, yet strove to be delicate in expressing that he saw my conduct in an improper light, whilst he seemed to consider it right in himself to give me a hint that dishonourable intentions would not be encouraged by him, and that he had no thought of my entertaining any other. "Is Margaretta going to be married?" I said, after a pause. "I wish she was well married," replied Hayton, still continuing his voice of distrust toward me. "I wish she was from my soul!" exclaimed I; and, starting up, wished Hayton good-morning, and left the house: I could not bear to stay longer, after my feelings had thus been put to the test.

Days and nights after this conversation I passed in reflection and irresolution what steps to take in order to secure Margaretta as mine, and still avoid wounding the proud heart of my father. For one whole month uncertainty how to act kept me from visiting Hayton's cottage; at the expiration of that time I went: I found the door locked; I knocked with my whip, the little boy whom Margaretta had held by the hand the first time of my seeing her opened the door, and having called out, "Nobody at home," shut it again, without waiting my reply. I rode up to the window, nobody was to be seen; a field encircled the little garden, and I could not gain a view of it from the road. A debate arose in my mind whether what the child said was the truth or a polite way of refusing me admittance: I could not forbear deciding

ciding on the latter : I resolved however to make another experiment before I drew my ultimate conclusion. I accordingly, after some days, went again, but not without suffering the time which had usually passed between my visits to have elapsed ; I knocked at the door as before ; but a repeated summons brought no one to answer it. I considered, as I sat upon my horse before it, that it was possible they might both be from home ; but still I could not help fearing that was not the cause of my being kept on the outside. After some time I rode dejectedly away : I was too much absorbed in disagreeable thought to guide my horse, and I did not perceive that he strayed out of the road, till a gate which opened into a field stopping him, roused me to recollection, and showed me where I was. I looked round me and perceiving the village steeple at a little distance, I instantly knew whither I had strayed, and turned round my horse's head. I had the green to cross in order to gain the right road, and as I came upon it I saw Margaretta about a hundred yards from Hayton's dwelling. I rode up to her in an instant : " How do you do, Margaretta ! " I said ; " I hope you are very well ; I have been unfortunate in not finding you or your father at home the two last times I have called." — " No, we were not at home," replied Margaretta, and continued to move towards the cottage. " Shall I find your father at home now ? " I asked. " No, sir," she answered, and accelerated her pace. I continued to ride by her side : " I suppose you mean, that he had rather I did not come to his house," I returned. She was unprepared for this remark, indeed she seemed to have been agitated by our meeting, and said, " Much rather, sir." — " Good God, Margaretta ! " I said, " what fears can he have on my account ? "

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She quickened her walk into a run. I still continued by her side, and added, "Pray tell me, if you know, what fears he has on my account." "They are not," she said, "on your ——" and then, from want of breath or a sudden recollection, she stopped. "Not on what?" I asked. A blush which rose on her cheeks answered for her, that they were on *her* account; and, as if mortified by this silent confession, of which she was fully conscious, yet had not been able to avoid making, she cried, "Pray, sir, do not follow me." I doubt I should not have obeyed her, had not chance worked in favour of my compliance; a bird at that moment flew from the hedge, my horse was surprised by it, and started out of the road; while I was regaining it, Margaretta had entered the cottage. I durst not follow her; I felt a reverence for her virtues and the anxiety of the old man, which told me I was not authorised to disturb their peace by my presence, till I thought myself at liberty to speak freely to them of my intentions. Perhaps it was the impression that Margaretta's confusion had on me, that rendered me thus considerate at that moment; or it might be some one other of the inexplicable impulses to which man is subject, that rendered me so entirely placid and satisfied; for I returned home with as great composure as if I had been received at the house of old Hayton in the quality of his daughter's intended husband, and that no earthly power could have forbid our union. I believe—and it is an extreme pleasure to me, to believe—that my sensations arose from the additional certainty her innocent timidity had given me, at our accidental meeting, of her virtue. But these sensations, strong and pleasant as they for some time were, gave way at length to the desire of seeing Margaretta; I had numberless anxieties

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on her account, and as many on the score of my own happiness; I feared particularly that Margaretta, ignorant of my intentions, should form any connection which might for ever cut me off from being blessed by possessing her. Still I could not persuade myself that I should be acting as it became me to act during the lifetime of Sir Edmund, if I now avowed my heart to Margaretta; nor was I entirely free from apprehension that if I did so, and the knowledge of what I had done reached the ears of my father, he would not find some means of depriving me for ever of my dearest wish in life. For the two succeeding months I constrained myself not to approach the green: I accidentally met with a farmer in the course of the time, who confirmed to me the little history of Hayton, which I had before heard from himself, and eased me on another point which had caused me some thought—(for of what, concerning the woman he loves, will not a man situated as I am think?)—that the boy whom I had seen with Margaretta was the child of a poor widow in the neighbourhood, to whom she was extremely kind: indeed, his account of her universal benevolence, as far as her means extended, was such as could not fail to give her character weight with those who were most indifferent to her. Last week I rode over the green, I passed close to the house, but had not courage to ask admittance, and I saw neither Margaretta nor her father. Thus stand my affairs at this moment: am not I right in resolving that Margaretta shall be my wife? Virtue is false, or Margaretta must make me happy; but the fear alone of losing her, if I shall ever have cause for such fear, shall tempt me to conceal my sentiments while Sir Edmund lives. Now tell me, my friend, have I not determined to act with justice to myself; and to my father

father with the consideration due from a son to his parent? I long to hear from you; the approbation of the friend we esteem, adds an inestimable weight to whatever we have proposed to ourselves as the right.

I pity your situation, and sincerely wish you were released from it; but I commend you extremely for remaining in it, dissonant as it is to your feelings, till you can be freed from it with honour to yourself in the opinion of the world.

How vast a tract of sea divides us! A rumour of approaching peace has been some time whispered about; may it prove true, that I may once more enjoy the conversation of my Seymour! How much could I say if present with you, which the confined intercourse of paper will not allow to be said! yet I will not repine; I am infinitely thankful for the invention which permits us to hold intercourse at all; without it, we were dead to each other. Write as long a letter as your time will allow you to do; give your opinion freely; be in this point as you have often proved yourself on many other occasions, the true friend of,—Yours, most sincerely, &c.

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER IV.

Major Seymour to Charles Melford, Esquire:

MY DEAR CHARLES,

Albany.

SINCE I wrote to you last, I have been absent from this place on several excursions. To-day, on my return to it, it gave me infinite satisfaction to

to find that a letter, the superscription of which I knew to be your hand-writing, was awaiting my arrival: it had however lain at General R——'s only since yesterday morning.

I have read your account with the attention which the subject requires: I think you, Charles, indubitably right in determining to select the partner of your life for the qualities which she may possess for making you happy, rather than for making you great. I also much approve the conduct you have marked out to yourself to sustain towards your father: he is descending fast into the vale of life; and it becomes you, as far as you are able without injuring the peace of your own mind, to make his few remaining years those of tranquility. Nothing could give me more pleasure than to hear that you had resolved never to marry from interested views; it is a rock on which happiness is usually wrecked: but forget not, at the same time, that it is very possible for romantic attachments to abate in their ardour, for marriage to open the eyes which love has blinded, and for clouds to darken the Arcadian prospect of unions founded only on personal attachments. You as yet seem to know but little of Margaretta yourself; I can know still less; you must, therefore, not be displeased at my warning you to be certain that she possesses the qualities you require to find in her, before you make advances to her heart, from which you might think yourself not justified to recede, if ever you found your expectations deceived. Charles, I have often admonished you on one point in your conduct, which I must here repeat: your heart is good, perfectly free from intentional error, and often the promoter of material benefit; but you are always too sanguine in your expectations, too enthusiastic in your approbations, and too certain
of

of events turning out as you have formed them in your own mind: your disposition also is rather volatile; I do not mean to accuse you of changing your opinion from wilful caprice, but too often, if the contrary of any idea, in support of which you have before been strenuous, appears to you for a moment in a pleasing light, the quick composition of your mind causes you immediately to see it with approbation, and adopt it with enthusiasm, as the right. Your understanding is too good to require of me to point out to you how your temper, thus considered, might become the enemy of your heart, in your plan of future happiness. This only foible of your mind—this too great quickness of determination, I saw with pleasure had begun to abate when we parted; I wish the time I have been absent from you may have entirely removed it. Let me advise you to consider again and again, before you determine, at least in the knowledge of any one but your own heart, to make Margaretta your wife. If you propose to yourself a domestic life of retirement, you are to consider whether she, whose education cannot have been equally liberal with your own, will, even with the instructions you may be able to give her, become the companion you would select for such retirement. If you purpose introducing her into the gay circles of polished life, you should equally consider whether she is calculated to appear in the light it would please you to have Sir Charles Melford's lady considered. I look upon the sacrifices made to rank with as much contempt as you can do: inequality of birth is certainly immaterial to the happiness of the man who has sufficient strength of mind to place his happiness on one sole object who is capable of affording it to him, and to disregard the flections of the world; but if he is not prepared to do that, then,

domestic retirement
37

then I recommend an equality of stations to those who join in the marriage state, for the world is always most ready to attempt wounding the feelings of those whom it ought most to protect. They at whom the world sneer, are always the eminent in person or virtue, and particularly the possessors of a pleasing, artless simplicity; because it cannot bear to see its affectation of amiable qualities unconsciously outdone by nature. Reflect well on all these points; and when you have reflected upon them, dismiss them for a few months from your thoughts; and on resuming them at the expiration of any fixed period, examine attentively whether you think exactly the same upon them as you did when you first began to consider them; and then let the reply of your conscience determine you how to act with Margaretta.

It gives me great pleasure to learn that you were well; it would afford me a greater satisfaction to know that you were happy in the way you desire to be, but caution alone can promote your wish with any certainty of its permanency. Farewel, my dear Charles, present my respects to Sir Edmund Melford, and believe me, with unfeigned truth,

Yours, &c.

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

LET.

LETTER V.

Charles Melford, Esquire, to Major Seymour.

Melford-house.

I AGAIN write, my dear friend, without waiting for your answer to my last; I have so much to tell you, that I cannot be silent. Margaretta, the divine Margaretta, is——but you shall hear it regularly.

When I wrote to you last, I had not seen Margaretta for two months; the heart of love is not formed to endure a voluntary absence; and rather than live without seeing her, I resolved to go and impart in secrecy to her father my intention of making her my wife at the death of Sir Edmund. What particularly urged me to this resolution, was my fear of her forming any engagement which might utterly destroy my hopes; and I durst not hazard the employing of any spy upon her conduct, lest a suspicion of my own, should be carried to my father. The weather was too sultry towards the end of the hot month of August to admit of long morning rides, accordingly, knowing my father to be very shortly going on a visit of two days and a night to a neighbouring baronet, I intended to wait the opportunity of his absence for riding to the green. When the time came for Sir Edmund's departure, I feigned a slight indisposition, which excused me from accompanying him: late in the afternoon I mounted my horse, and soon arrived before the cottage of old Hayton; the door was partly open, I dismounted, hung my bridle over some rails which encircled a little garden in front of the cottage,

tage, and went in. There was nobody in the kitchen; nobody to be seen through the glass door of the little parlour; I lifted the latch to go into the garden, a gentle step sounded at that instant over my head, and the voice of Margaretta asked from the top of the stairs, "Who is there?" I told her; she advanced in silence almost to the bottom of the stairs, then said, "Pray, sir, go away, my father is very ill." Her eyes were swelled with weeping. "Very ill, Margaretta!" I exclaimed. "Very ill—dying," she answered, and her tears burst forth afresh. "I conjure you to let me see him," I said with an earnestness that seemed to surprise her. "Indeed, sir, you must not!" she replied—"you cannot see him."—"I beseech you to entreat that I may see him, if it be but for one instant." I moved towards the stairs, and she receded, apparently more to avoid me, than for the purpose of delivering my message. She disappeared for a few minutes, then returned with these words: "My father, sir, says, your former visits were against his inclination, and that he begs you will not disturb him at this moment."—"Tell him," I cried, "that I am come to atone for whatever may have appeared impropriety in my conduct, and that if the power of making a fellow-creature happy can sooth his hour of dissolution, he will not refuse to see me." Margaretta hesitated what to do; I relieved her by exclaiming. "For God's sake tell him so!" She returned to the chamber. Scarcely had she entered it, before she shrieked, and I could no longer refrain from running up stairs. "What—is the matter?" I would have said, but Margaretta understood my question, and interrupted me by crying out. "One of his fits is come on again, he may now be in the agonies of death."—

"Have

“Have you no assistance at hand?” I asked. “The surgeon was to have called about this time,” she answered; and turning her face to the bed, continued, “Oh my father is dying!” I’ll run and fetch him:”—the surgeon I suppose she meant: and ran down stairs with a precipitancy expressive of her painful feelings. I advanced towards the bed; in it lay Hayton with his eyes closed, and his jaws expanded, while inward convulsions were writhing every part of his frame. I stood by his side for some moments ignorant how to act, and wondering at my own peculiar situation. Presently, with an effort apparently made to gain breath, he raised himself hastily in the bed, and as hastily sunk down again upon his pillow; his eyes opened slowly, and he turned them towards me; sense was not entirely fled, for something like surprise darted into them when he beheld me. I threw myself almost immediately upon my knees, and said; “I beg of you to hear me with composure.” He endeavoured to speak, but his utterance was indistinct. I interrupted him in what I could not understand by saying, “I come to entreat of you the lovely Margaretta for my wife; oh tell me I have your permission to make her mine!” Hayton used a violent exertion to answer me, but could not articulate, a single sound. “If you cannot speak, signify to me that I have your consent,” I cried; Hayton’s eyes no longer looked on me, they were fixed, and he lay motionless. Margaretta’s returning stop was now on the stairs; almost breathless she entered the chamber, and flew towards the bed. “The surgeon is not at home,” she said, and leant for support against one of the posts. About a minute passed in silence, during which Margaretta saw I was kneeling, but did not speak. Hayton made another effort to raise himself in the bed, and
with

with a groan sunk down to rise no more ; his spirit fled within a few moments. Margaretta fell senseless upon the corpse. What a time was this for a man who felt as I did ! reverence, pity, and joy, mingled so strangely in my heart that they deprived me of all power. When Margaretta began to revive, it first occurred to me to offer her some water which stood upon the table ; she drank of it, and her tears again flowed. " Have you no female friend," I said, " whom you can call in to your assistance ?"—" Yes," she replied, " there is a poor woman at the next cottage ; she had but just left me, when you came in."—" I'll fetch her to you," I answered. A decent looking woman, who was the person that she had spoken of, and the widow whom I mentioned to you in one of my letters, came in at that instant. A mournful silence again ensued ; I broke it by saying, " Have you no friends or relations to go to ? you must leave this house."—" No, no," she replied, " not while——" and she fixed her eyes on the dead body. I repeated the question I had advanced to Margaretta to the woman, and found that she knew no one, upon whom she had claims either of affinity or friendship. " She has nobody at all belonging to her that I know of," said the woman, " but her brother, and he's a soldier, and gone nobody knows whither."—" She has one friend present," cried I, " who will never desert her : will not you acknowledge me as your friend, Margaretta ?" I asked. " Sir," said she, resuming a little composure as she spoke, " I am very able to support myself ; I am strong, and can, and will work, rather than disobey him who can no longer advise me for my good : he has already warned me against receiving any favours from you."—" He did not know me then," I replied, " in the light I ought to have shewn myself

to him long ago, but he did before he died, 'for I have promised myself to him as your most sacred friend. Permit me," I continued, "to find you an asylum possessing the comforts, and free from the cares of life."—"Oh!" cried Margaretta, "before the body of my poor father is cold in death, I already find myself exposed to those snares to which he foresaw my unprotected state would leave me open!" She again sunk upon the bed, and the tears streamed down her cheeks. "By Heaven," I exclaimed, taking her hand, and pressing it in the energy of my feelings both for her and myself, "you do me injustice in your opinion of my heart; I swear by my hopes of eternal happiness, that I wish only to supply to you the place of him who is no longer able to protect you;—to become your friend." Had I said husband, Seymour, you may imagine I had more easily convinced her of my honour, but I feared, as she knew my rank in life, that it might only add to her distrust of me; and another reason for my not declaring myself was the presence of the woman: she turned from me I thought—I hoped, half convinced of my integrity. After some time, I persuaded her to leave the body of her father, and she did not withdraw her arm as I placed it through mine to lead her down the stairs. On the first agony of her grief beginning to subside, I again urged her to the acceptance of my protection: she seemed to dread equally the being cast unprotected upon the world, and the relying her defence from it upon the man whose unexplained conduct had made him fall under the suspicion of her father. "How can I believe you are really my friend?" she said; "I see no motive by which you can have been actuated to become so to one who was a few months ago an utter stranger to you."—"Has your youth, I returned,

"even

“even in the seclusion in which you have lived, already formed so bad an opinion of men, that you think no heart warmed by humanity is to be found in the world?”—“I have learnt enough,” she replied, “to know that some men are treacherous.”—“But it must be unjust in you,” I said, “to condemn all upon that knowledge.” She did not answer me. “Come to my cottage for the night and sleep there, pray do,” said the woman. Margaretta refused to leave the house that contained her father. I could only reflect upon Margaretta, not what were best to be done for her, while in her presence, and I therefore went out upon the green. I walked some time but could form no plan that pleased me; I called out the woman, and questioned her again whether she did not know of any friend, any acquaintance, that old Hayton had possessed. She told me that nobody had ever come to his cottage except a Mrs. Wallace who lived about four miles off. The acquaintance of old Hayton with Mrs. Wallace was very satisfactory to me. Mrs. Wallace is the widow of a farmer who had rented land of my father; at her husband’s death she retired from business, and now lives in a comfortable house which had been built for her by Mr. Wallace. As Sir Edmund was to return on the following day to Melford-house, I considered that I ought to lose no time in placing Margaretta in a satisfactory situation; I accordingly mounted my horse, and did not stop till I reached the house of Mrs. Wallace. The evening was far advanced, and I found her at supper; she rose to receive me, and, as was usual with her, expressed much pleasure at seeing me. I had always been much more intimate at the house of Mrs. Wallace than my father would have suffered me to be, had he known it: she was the mother of an only son,

who was very often in my youth the companion of my sports in the field ; at his father's death he went into the army, and is now in America. I immediately asked her if she knew Hayton ; she answered me that he was an old friend of her deceased husband, that she respected him as an honest man who had been unfortunate in the world. I informed her that accident had introduced me to him and his daughter when I was one day out shooting, and had stopped at their cottage to request a draught of ale ; I then proceeded to tell her the occurrence of the present evening ; and she did not give me time to mention my compassion for the orphan Margaretta, for on hearing of Hayton's death, she directly exclaimed, " What will become of his girl, poor helpless creature ! " Perceiving the heart of Mrs. Wallace already touched with pity, I without hesitation informed her that I meant to become the friend of Margaretta. " Bless you for a good creature ! " she exclaimed ; " you have twice the goodness of Sir Edmund, I must say it, and all the humility of an angel to sweeten it with." I was pleased only with this compliment at the expence of my father so far as I imagined that by showing Mrs. Wallace's approbation of my pity for Margaretta, it also indicated that she would assist me in any plan for promoting her comfort. Not to dwell upon unnecessary particulars, a very gentle hint from me, that I wished the house of Mrs. Wallace to become her asylum, drew from the old woman a whole train of arrangements for her future happiness. Oh, Seymour, at the moment when the heart of the worthy Mrs. Wallace was expanded in good-will towards Margaretta, and the tears of compassion stood in her eyes, I knew not whether it would be culpable or meritorious in me to applaud her exquisite feelings ; my own heart

whispered

whispered to me at that moment, and I chilled upon the reflection, this poor widow, with no more than a sufficiency for herself, is willing to share what she does possess with the child of distress; how differently would my father, deluged in wealth, act towards this humble-born child of virtue! I did not chill upon *this* part of my reflection, but I did, when the *present* brought into my mind the *hereafter*! I repeated to Mrs. Wallace, again and again, that wherever Margaretta was placed, her necessities and comforts were alike to be supplied from my purse: but to this assurance Mrs. Wallace seemed quite inattentive; it was to soothing the immediate distress of the poor child as she termed Margaretta, that all her thoughts were turned. It was at length agreed between us, that I should return home for that night, and call again upon Mrs. Wallace the next morning by six o'clock, against which time she promised she would have her little cart ready, and ride with me to the green. I went to bed but for a very few hours, and slept scarcely one. Earlier than the appointed hour I reached the house of Mrs. Wallace; she was, however, prepared to receive me, and we set out together.— We found Margaretta just risen, and, as her heavy eyes bespoke, from a sleepless bed; they sparkled faintly with pleasure on beholding Mrs. Wallace: the good woman embraced her, sat down by her, took her hand in her's, and began to soothe to her. Mrs. Wallace had been esteemed by Hayton, and Mrs. Wallace now spoke of me to Margaretta in terms of the highest respect; she heard, and her doubts respecting me immediately appeared to vanish: was not this a proof of an excellent, a feeling heart? When she saw me esteemed by her deceased father's friend, she ceased to fear me.

I perceive

I perceive my paper is nearly full, suffice it then for me to add, that, upon Margareta's refusing to leave the body of her father till after his interment, Mrs. Wallace consented to remain with her till that ceremony had taken place; that I visited her as frequently as I could leave my father's house without giving any suspicion of my having an engagement of the moment I really had; and that, when old Hayton was buried, Margareta went home with Mrs. Wallace, thankful for the protection she had found in her: she removed to the house of Mrs. Wallace only yesterday, thus I have not seen her since she has been there. I shall write to you again immediately on my receiving a letter from you. Oh, how I bless Heaven for the protection it has enabled me to show to this tender blossom of innocence and virtue! Adieu: envy me I am sure you will not; feel therefore with your most sincere friend, &c.

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER VI.

Charles Melford Esquire, to Major Seymour.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Melford-house.

YOUR letter dated from Albany, and received yesterday evening, now lies before me. Seymour, I have followed the advice it contains before I knew you had given it to me; I have resolved, in justice to Margareta, not to let her know me in any other character than that of friend. It is not that I doubt the stability of my own mind to the supreme happiness which an honourable union with her promises me; on this point I can never change; it is on the following consider-

considerations that I resolve to keep my intentions still secret from her and Mrs. Wallace.—Margaretta has already begun to think me really her friend, and to esteem me as such; Mrs. Wallace, whilst she believes me only actuated by a benevolent heart in my conduct towards Margaretta, will not suffer Sir Edmund to gain a knowledge of my charity, lest he should prevent its continuance; and, perhaps, if she knew that I meant to make her hereafter the partner of my fortunes, she might not think herself justified in being a party concerned in hiding my conduct from the eyes of Sir Edmund. Besides, I promise myself ultimately an excessive pleasure from keeping my real intentions secret, till I cannot insult any one by their open declaration. Margaretta has already begun to show herself grateful; is it not possible, George, nay very probable, that a heart already thus softened towards one particular object, may, as the intentions of that object increase, feel for him a tenderer passion than gratitude? If she does, her obligations to him, her knowledge of his rank in the world, and her own inferiority of birth, will doubtless confine it a prisoner to her breast; but then how will it rankle in its captive state! My own heart tells me how it will prove the tyrant of its prison; and my own heart instructs me by anticipation, what will be the extatic transport of mutual confession. I argue too from this imprisonment of love, a happy as well as a delightful end; custom will have taught it to revere the spot of its confinement, and it will never totally desert the hearts where it has been bred and nourished.

I have begun to lend Margaretta books, and to instruct her how to read with advantage to herself; and she proves to me more forcibly every day, that I was not deceived in thinking, that eyes

like hers must hold intelligence with a mind of extreme capability.

Mrs. Wallace is delighted with the society Margaretta affords her : with what exquisite delicacy does she perform every little attention towards her hostess, that may in any way bespeak her thankfulness for her protection ! Hayton subsisted on a slender annuity, derived to him from a sum of money he had sunk on becoming incapable of attending to business ; it, of course, dies with him, and a few guineas are all the wordly possessions of Margaretta. A letter, or rather a small packet, has been found in a drawer since his decease, directed, " To be given to his son by Margaretta, if she should ever see him again ; and, in case of her learning his death, to be opened by herself." Margaretta imagines it to be the title-deeds relating to two acres of land which were once disputed for in law by old Hayton, in right of his wife, who he thought was the heir to them, and which could not, as she says, be decided till a man who has been some years gone to the East-Indies, and not heard of since, can be found. Margaretta knows not where to address her brother Thomas ; his disposition was from his boyhood wild and extravagant ; he bore his father's checks upon his idleness with ill-humour, and without amendment ; and at last, in consequence of a dispute between them, he enlisted into a marching regiment then recruiting at Oakham, whither he walked for the purpose : his father did not know for some days what was become of him, and when he learnt this intelligence, he could not find out the number of the regiment, nor the name of the sergeant who had enlisted him ; the recruiting party came to the town for the day of the fair only. It is now five years ago, and he has never been heard of by them since.

If

If he continues worthless, he is better at a distance from his sister; if he ever returns reclaimed, his situation shall be rendered comfortable to him.

Mrs. Wallace warns me, to speak in her language, "not to give Margareta too much learning, as there is no knowing what she may come to, if any thing should happen to me." I answer her, "that a good education cannot be an ill store in any condition of life." She replies, "I dare say your honour will do all for the best." I do not tell Mrs. Wallace or Margareta so, but I *have* done all for the best; as far as lies in my ability; for, in case of my death happening the next moment to this in which I am now writing, I have placed the object of my love far above want. I often read with her; how exquisite is it to see the comprehension of subjects, whose truth and force she feels on having them explained to her, first beam on her mind! Seymour, she possesses the strongest proof of sense; the knowledge she acquires gives her neither self-conceit nor vanity upon the parts she possesses; she is pleased and thankful that every day is made to add to her store of knowledge; but she sees that the more she learns, the more is still left for her to acquire. She approaches me with an openness and modest confidence of manner, which bespeak her alike pleased with my friendship, grateful for my benefits, and at the same time conscious that she should displease me by humiliating herself before me. When a few moments alone with her the other day, I took an opportunity to say, "Are you not now convinced, Margareta, that I never had an evil design towards you?" She hesitated an instant and then replied, "Should you have conceived so well of me, as I believe you now do, if I had trusted myself without caution to a young stranger like yourself?" I could smile

approbation to her question; if I had spoken, I had betrayed myself. She has now been two months in habits of growing intimacy with me, but I cannot bring her to throw off a certain degree of respect, with which she uniformly treats me; I ask her to call me Charles; she insists on giving me no other appellation than Mr. Melford. I enquired of her this morning, "why she continued resolute in giving me this formal title?" She answered me, "that, in her opinion, the difference of our situations required it of her."—"Have you forgot," I replied, "what I have said to you on the natural equality of all worthy members of the community?"—"There is a casual distinction between us," she returned, "for which my heart points out to me that respect is due; I owe you the submission of gratitude."—After these proofs of excellence, Seymour, can I be deceived in my choice of happiness?—Blush, ye cold minds of refinement, at the natural sense, not only felt but exercised, by this heart of rustic virtue!—I am warm myself upon the subject on which I am writing, and run out into a string of examples of the worth of my Margarettas, without considering that you cannot read, as I write them, with a soul on fire.

Sir Edmund asked me the other day, "Why I did not marry?" I evaded the question and he returned, that "he supposed I was wise enough to see there was hardly any match in the kingdom worth my seeking after." I bowed in return to what I knew I should please him by appearing to consider as a compliment paid to me by him, and the subject dropped. He desires me to return you his compliments, and to present you with his good wishes for your safe return to England; in which hope I trust you will not doubt

his

Sincerely

his being fervently joined by yours, with the most affectionate regard, &c.

CHARLES MELFORD.



LETTER VII.

Major Seymour to Charles Melford, Esq.

DEAR CHARLES,

New York.

I HAVE now two letters of yours unanswered: a wound in the sword arm has prevented me the ability of writing to you; and I was conscious that to employ a third person in our correspondence would, on the contrary to being a satisfaction to you, only unnecessarily raise your apprehensions for me. As I am now again able to write to you, I need not say that I am fast recovering from my wound; my health has been impaired from the confinement occasioned me by the pain of my arm; but that also is beginning now to improve fast.

I think, whilst you have the feelings of a lover for Margaretta, you have acted towards her the part becoming a man who possesses your ability for befriending the unprotected orphan. The insensibility to distress in many of your rank of life, is not less a reflection upon themselves than upon the humanity of the country in which they live; and thus considered, as a slur which may fall

fall generally upon the character of the people, it becomes a justice to himself, in every individual, to reprobate this hardness of heart. There are some families of the first eminence in England, I with pleasure acknowledge, who make the children of affliction their peculiar care; amongst the number of those who are praise-worthy, it is but right to name you very particularly: I know the universal benevolence of your heart, and upon that I applaud you; your conduct towards Margaretta, singly considered, had not drawn this eulogium from me, because, in that particular case, the end of serving a fellow-creature is your own private happiness.

I am glad the light in which you now stand to Margaretta will leave open to you so good an opportunity for thoroughly investigating your own heart: remember that you have promised me you will use it; let not an unguarded moment cheat you out of your determination; consider how differently, how uncomfortable you would feel, if any hasty declaration were made by you, only to be repented, and the cold law of honour were to hold the place of your present rapturous feelings.

There have been many men in the world before your time, and no doubt will continue to be while the world exists, who have possessed changeable dispositions, with less enthusiastic tempers than yours; but with the sanguine temper you possess, it becomes you to be particularly careful in the formation of engagements, because what appears so very exquisite to the first sight, may not always have been very accurately considered; thus, on cool examination, it may be very likely to fall short of what it had promised to prove, as many objects which, on
being

being first viewed, promise little, on closer examination rise in our esteem.

While you are acting openly only the part of the friend, your conduct will be right and honourable; but beware of showing yourself too soon to be the lover. If I have repeated to you any admonition which my last letter contained, impute it to my desire of your welfare: if I have said too freely, that I have seen your mind capable of being turned from its firmest determinations, it is only in the hope that you will in future banish instability of sentiment from your heart: you have good sense and good morals, and I do not wish the world to have it in its power to judge of you as they are too apt to do in general—that those are defective, where the passions are volatile. I am sure you would not willingly commit an error, therefore guard against the appearance of it.

My arm will not permit me to write any longer: farewell: if I have said too much, which I hope I have not, impute it to the friendship of him who is really your most sincere well-wisher, &c.

P. S. A letter directed simply for me in this place, will I trust reach me, as my confinement causes my station to be very generally known.

LET.

LETTER VIII.

Charles Melford, Esq. to Major Seymour.

Melford-house.

IMPOSSIBLE! my dear George, impossible! that I should be displeased at the candour of your advice; I am sensible of the defects in my temper of which you speak, but my attachment to Margaretta I trust will prove an infallible precedent for my adhering in future to my resolutions, or rather my not acting without due consideration. The impulse of the moment I allow has often had too great weight with me, but in the time to come I will be more wary; it is however no inconsiderable satisfaction to me, that my faults have not been criminal, I have at least preserved my heart from self-reproach; gallantry has been amongst my gentle errors, but although the sex have had extreme charms for me, I have never injured the husband, nor insulted the ears of modesty.

I have nothing new to tell you of Margaretta, but that she improves in my esteem and in her own qualifications.

I have lately been much less fond of company than I used to be, and have dedicated more than ever of my time to reading. I have ~~been~~ Seymour, to see an error in my education, which has often occurred to me as being such, but which I have only within these few days been convinced to be so: whatever I have learnt of any country but my own, has been from books; an education cannot be truly finished, nor all our ideas perfectly exact and liberal, unless they are formed from

from ocular and auricular observations on those spots which give rise to them: I may know Paris is a large city, I may know the Appennines are a long tract of mountains covered with snow; but what more just idea can I form of them, from the description of a person in whom it would have amounted almost a miracle for him to have beheld them with the same feelings and under the same impression that I should do? Still more defective must be my opinions of the customs, manners, and characters of such men as I have not conversed with. I have always felt a kind of reverence for Italy, and longed to view its magnificent scenes of decayed splendor, and present inimitable art; and I have now resolved, if my inclination is not thwarted by my father, to visit it. Perhaps you will think this sudden resolution an example of the temper of which you complain, but I am sure you must agree with me, that the inclination is a natural one, and that the life-time of my father must be the most eligible period for me to leave Margaretta. Yes, Seymour, I am resolved to impart to him my wish, and at all events if his inclination is averse to parting from me, I can but conform to it. No time is therefore to be lost in my application; I wish the idea had occurred to me sooner; I cannot recal the past time, my only care therefore must be not to let the future escape me also. Sir Edmund is now alone in his room; I will go to him and learn the event of my inclination: wish me success. I shall, if I obtain his permission to see this country of which I have formed so high an opinion, wish myself back against your arrival here, if it is even before I have kissed his holiness's toe. I shall continue my letter when I return from my father. Adieu for a while.

Oh,

Six o'clock in the evening.

OH, Seymour! Sir Edmund is I fear now lying on the bed of death: I have experienced a great shock. Full of my project I went this morning to his dressing-room, where within these few years he has usually sat alone till the hour of dinner; conceive my surprise when, on opening the door, the first object which presented itself to my sight, was my father fallen from his chair upon the floor, and his head rested on the marble hearth! I went to him, and endeavoured to raise him; he was unable himself to assist my effort: I rang the bell, his servant obeyed the summons, and our united strength lifted him from the ground, and laid him upon his bed. A paralytic stroke had benumbed his limbs and deprived him of his speech. I immediately sent for the physician who has before attended him: on his arrival he did not hesitate to give me very slender hopes of his recovery. By the physician's order he was undressed, and put into bed. No visible alteration has taken place in him since the first of his attack: he is unable to swallow, or at least refuses to receive any nourishment into his throat. I fear much myself for his recovery, as this is the second stroke he has suffered.

The letter I am writing must be in London the day after to-morrow, I will however leave it unsealed till the morning, in case any change should take place.

Morning.

SIR Edmund continues exactly the same, motionless, and apparently insensible; the physician has ordered a blister to be placed on his throat, as the last resource. Farewel: depend on being informed

informed by me of any material alteration, and believe me

Yours sincerely, &c.

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER IX.

Sir Charles Melford to Major Seymour.

DEAR GEORGE,

Melford-house.

SIR Edmund is no more ! He expired on the following day to that on which I last addressed you, and his remains were yesterday deposited in the family vault. I should have written to you earlier this account, but I was informed that no American mail would leave London till to-morrow at the soonest.

I cannot accuse my father of ever having been defective to me in such conduct as he thought conducive to my happiness, within the pale of those aristocratic principles by which alone, in his opinion, our rank in life could be sustained ; I therefore now forget his errors, and remember only his good qualities.

Well, I am now Sir Charles Melford, Baronet, in the mouth of the world ; in my own appellation, a free agent. Do not you think, Seymour, that my first concern will now be to make Margaretta my wife ? I am not yet determined whether it will or not, but I think it will not. Do not, I charge you, imagine that it has been possible for any power in heaven or on earth to weaken my

my love for Margaretta ; it is only that, when I once taste the happiness which is able to result to me from her love, I may taste it in perfection and without interruption. If I suffer the ardour of the attachment which I feel for Margaretta to supersede every other passion at this moment, and immediately marry, think you not that it is very possible I shall, after a time, become dissatisfied that I had not, before I married her, visited those countries to see which my inclination so strongly bends at this time ? Shall I not then, perhaps, still wish to go, and yet feel a reluctance to leave Margaretta as my wife ? when to part from her for a time, while she knows me only as a friend, would require but a comparatively slender effort. I lay down my pen for a while, to reflect again upon this perplexing topic of thought.

Noon.

IF I wait for your advice upon this subject, I must at least suffer three months to pass unoccupied in waiting its arrival ; in six months half my curiosity would doubtless be satisfied, and in as many more I may be the happy husband of Margaretta. Two weighty reasons at this moment present themselves to my imagination in favour of my making my wished-for tour ; the first is, that, if Sir Edmund had lived a few months longer, I should doubtless have gone abroad ; then why should I now be prevented the high gratification I promise myself that the journey will afford me, as the obstacle to it exists only in my own mind, Margaretta being ignorant of my intentions towards her ? The second reason is still more authoratative ; I mean the regard to decency which must unavoidably delay my marriage at least half a year, were I to remain the entire time in the kingdom.

I an-

I anticipate much from the pleasures of reflection, if I make this agitated journey; I shall then Seymour, when we meet, have my story to tell, in balance to yours, of the novel scenes in which we have both been actors. Another inducement starts up at this moment; against my return you may be in England to witness my nuptials, you may be the matrimonial father of my Margaretta. You smile, methinks, and say; "How easily arguments are found to give colour to the point on which we are bent!" You say too, "This is his sanguine temper, his enthusiastic spirit has again broken out." Do not blame me yet, my friend; if I do go, wait my return to chide me: if my plan has unsettled me, accuse me, hate me, place, if possible, a bar to my ever possessing Margaretta; but it will be my pride to compel you, by my settled conduct, to a confession of the good that has accrued to me, from justifying my thirst of obtaining personal knowledge of a country whose past fame and present beauty has excited me to visit it. I am determined that you shall not allege against me want of consideration in the present instance; I will therefore visit Margaretta, and afterwards give it a couple of hours more thought in a walk through the wood.

Seven o'clock.

I AM resolved; I go to Italy. Margaretta has resolved me. I mentioned to her just now my idea of travelling; and she answered me, "I judge by your manner of speaking it would give you a great deal of pleasure."—"Yes, it would," I said.—"Then I am sure you ought to go," she replied; "you have a great right to allow yourself indulgences." I suppose she meant as a recompense for what I had done for her; little did she imagine how great a recompense I promise myself.

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As I have resolved to go, the sooner I set out the better. How infinitely happy I now feel that I have studied the French and Italian languages with the attention which I have given to them.— This will be the last letter I shall write to you before I leave England; I shall be detained some days upon business I have to transact with my steward.

If you think me wrong, be lenient to me in your reproofs; remember you have asserted yourself of me, that you believe my head and not my heart to be in fault, when I act too hastily; and remember, that this determination has not been taken without consideration. I cannot be wronging Margareta in leaving her for a time, because she is unconscious that she possesses any other hold upon my heart than what is claimed by her friendship situation; and absence will eventually be her friend, in adding, if possible, to the passion I already feel for her, against my return. Oh, with what delight I anticipate our meeting, when Margareta is — But I shall weary you with dwelling on the same theme. Farewel, dear George. Direct your first letter for me hither; my steward will be acquainted whither to send it after me. I sincerely hope this letter may find you perfectly recovered from your wound. Once more farewel; and believe me,

Your affectionate friend, &c.

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER

LETTER X.

Sir Charles Melford to Major Seymour.

Calais.

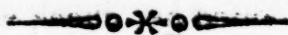
THE first moment that is my own, after crossing Channel, I dedicate to addressing my friend. Oh, Seymour, at parting Margaretta dropped a tear ! As she wiped it off her cheek, she thanked me for the generosity and friendship I had shewn to her. This was the meaning which she gave to it ; I could not forbear hoping it bore another, a tenderer one, and kissed her cheek when I left her. Do you think she saw what were my feelings ? I will not think upon it till a future time.

I have had a comfortable passage from Dover : I shall travel with comfort to myself, but without parade ; one confidential servant is the whole of my retinue. My landlord has just been into my room, to ask me a great many unnecessary questions, in a very polite and cringing tone ; and he informs me, that the preliminaries of peace are said to be actually signed. I must have better authority for this intelligence, before I flatter myself that you are near obtaining permission for returning to England. I consider it a tribute due to your friendship to inform you immediately of my arrival in this kingdom ; but you must not expect me to protract my letter to any great length. I have scarcely slept since I left Melford-house ; it is now midnight, and I have passed the better half of the past day on board the packet, in no very enviable state of health ; can you be surprised then that the idea of my bed is inviting ? Good night,

night, dear George, and believe me with sincerity,
Yours, &c.

CHARLES MELFORD.

P. S. The report of peace is very prevalent, and seems to gain universal credit; a French officer just now told me, that he had no doubt of its being confirmed. I congratulate you most sincerely upon the event. I shall calculate on my pillow which of us two is the more likely to receive the other in England. I had forgot to tell you to direct your letters for me, in future, at the house of Monsieur l'Estrange, who is my banker in Paris.



LETTER XI.

Sir Charles Melford to Major Seymour.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Paris.

I HAVE now been six weeks absent from England, and yet I have only once addressed you: Shall I tell you my reason?—Indeed I think it will appear to you very plainly, without my writing it, that countries which have been so often described, by so much more able pens than mine, can gain nothing by my repetition. When any scene or anecdote occurs which I think worthy of relation, you may depend on my transmitting it to you. As the preliminaries of peace are actually signed, and that it is said orders are already sailed from England to call home the troops, it is doubtful to me whether you will receive this letter,

ter, which I shall direct for you at New York; accordingly, that, in case you should pass it at sea, I may not be deemed neglectful by you, I send a duplicate of it to await your arrival in London, at your brother Sir Oliver's.

I set out to-morrow for Geneva, from thence I shall cross the Alps to Turin, and so on to Venice: thus far of my route I have only determined upon at present: you will see that is marked out by my own inclination, and not in example of any eminent traveller who has gone before me. When I have any thing worthy relation you shall have a longer letter from me, till then adieu.

Margaretta is, at my desire, to write to me; when I receive one of her letters, I will inclose it to you, as a proof of her powers. Farewell, and believe me what I feel myself, your true friend, &c.

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER XII.

Major Seymour to Sir Charles Melford.

MY DEAR CHARLES,

London.

YOU will be surprised, I doubt not, at receiving a letter from me, already in England, when the news of peace has hardly yet reached America; but I have procured leave of absence thro' the favour of General R——, on account of my inability to use my right arm in my profession. I arrived two days ago at my brother's, in Grosvenor-

venor-square, where I learn that Sir Edmund is dead; and, to my infinite surprise, find a letter from you, dated at Paris, the middle of last month! —Why, Charles, what can have induced you to leave England?—Is Margaretta false?—Are you married?—or, are you tired of one another? —I am interrupted; but I will resume my pen immediately.

I this instant receive, by means of an officer who left New York a few days after myself, your two letters which contain an account of your father's illness and death, and your reasons for being now in France. Well, Charles, I have read your arguments twice over, and am not in this instance disposed to think them without weight: I applaud the liberal spirit of enquiry, which has invited you abroad; and I think as you do, that you will return much the happier for your tour, if, while you investigate the manners of others, you resolve to keep a tight rein over yourself. The whole track of an usual tour, particularly thro' France and Italy, is planted so thick with snares, that it requires the utmost caution to avoid being caught in some of them; many hundreds of every country live upon the strangers who visit them: be cautious in forming acquaintance, and be still more studious to avoid play and gallantry. Now I strongly recommend to you not to lose sight for a moment, if possible, of the engagement which subsists in your heart towards Margaretta; it may prove your guardian from many unpleasant situations. Consider yourself, whilst a traveller, in pursuit of instruction, not pleasure; it is a maxim I have heard recommended, and declared to be the sure means of obtaining both knowledge and amusement, with safety to yourself.

I trust now I am so much nearer to you than you imagined me to be when you wrote your last,
that

that you will give a little more extended account of what befalls you than you declared it your intention to do ; though I cannot hold my pen long together, you have not the same excuse, so pray indulge me with some of your remarks. I feel in extreme spirits at being once more in England, but a great part of my anticipated pleasure is curtailed by your absence. Farewell ; write soon to,
Yours, most truly, &c.

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

LETTER XIII.

Sir Charles Melford, to Major Seymour.

Turin.

YOUR unexpected letter from England, my dear Seymour, reached me as I was on the point of quitting Geneva, and I am now answering it immediately on my arrival at Turin, after a laborious yet heavenly journey over the snow-crested Alps. Little did I imagine when I opened your letter that you were already in London ; I congratulate you upon a return which I know gives you pleasure. I shall not remain in this place above a few days ; I have no letter to any of its inhabitants. My Paris banker has furnished me with an introduction to a nobleman at Venice, to whom he says my society, as being an Englishman, will be very pleasing, and that he will procure me a general acquaintance amongst the first families. I am entirely of your opinion that I ought to know no one to whom I have not been properly recommended. I am informed that a

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month may be spent by me to advantage at Venice, I shall not conclude this letter till I arrive there. I intend in future, as you wish to hear how I am employed, to write a paragraph of my letter as the matter which forms it occurs, and to send off my sheet when it is full.

Venice, Monday.

I HAVE been rather more than two hours on that spot which my imagination has always painted to my fancy in the most striking colours, and I can hardly yet determine whether my ideas are surpassed, equalled, or disappointed. One reason for my being unable easily to decide may possibly be, that it is so entirely different a place from any I have ever before seen that comparison can give me no assistance in forming my opinion. The approach to Venice, of which we have read so wonderful accounts, certainly lost upon me by anticipation; perhaps too, the approaching twilight may have been unfavourable to the view, for I have remarked that travellers generally give their description of it when glittered upon by the sun. Saint Mark's-place has far exceeded my ideas: when I was first conducted to my hotel, which stands in the square, I imagined the city was illuminated, and a concourse of people were assembled in the streets to view it; my mistake, however was soon explained to me, and I found that this spot was the evening walk of almost all ranks, and that the glare of light was no more than usual at that hour, and proceeded from the shops and casinos round about. The music in the middle of the square invites me to go down, and listen to it.

Ten o'Clock.

OH, Seymour, what an enchanting place is the promenade of Saint Mark's-place! laugh, dance, song, and music, arrest your attention at every step.

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step, issuing from the casinos, while your eye is feasted with the most elegant figures of both sexes, walking, some in parties, some singly up and down the square. But this scene would not be captivating in our dense and uncertain northern atmosphere; it is the clear, warm Italian sky, that must give a zest to these pleasures: beneath the azure star-studded canopy that impends the revels of an Italian evening, every unmasked woman appears a lesser divinity, and every one whose face is covered strikes you with the idea of her being the favourite goddess of this earthly paradise, who must be courted to crown the splendour of the scene with the radiance of her countenance. — Do not imagine, Seymour, that because I avow myself not insensible to the luxuries of this place, I am going to relapse into my former habits of gallantry; no, indeed, I am not; I am firm to Margareta; I consider myself as much bound to her, as if we were already married. But I may look, I may gaze upon beauty without coveting it. I intend when any object here particularly allures my sight, to turn my eyes inward, to take a view of Margareta engraved upon my heart; and I anticipate the triumph of returning them again to others of the sex, convinced of her superiority. I have written to her twice, and expect now to hear from her in a few days.

To-morrow I shall carry my recommendatory letter to the Marchese di Marvaldi, and when I have seen him I will continue my letter.

Tuesday.

I HAVE been received by the Marchese di Marvaldi in a manner not less flattering to myself as an individual than to the country of which I am a native. The Marchese has once, in his early
D 2 youth,

youth, visited England; speaks in the highest terms of the civilities he received there; and says, that to enjoy the society of an Englishman, and to repay the debt of politeness, which he owes to the country, are amongst his greatest pleasures. The Marchese appears to be about forty, with a hale constitution, and an expressive set of features; his understanding is good, his education has been finished, and his judgment would be without a fault, were it free from prejudice in favour of birth—a foible which experience has taught me easily to distinguish, and I believe to treat with as great lenity as most men would do, who do not feel it themselves. One daughter is the only child of the Marchese; he introduced me to her this morning: she is a beautiful girl between sixteen and seventeen; indeed, as far as regularity of features constitute perfect beauty, she possesses it: her figure too, though not tall, is of the most elegant symmetry, but her countenance wants that interest which can alone make a woman charming in my eyes:—she is a girl whom most men would I am sure call a divinity, but her beauty wants that fire without which my heart can never be touched. The house of the Marchese di Marvaldi is, indeed, as my director to it called it to me, a palace; the rooms are extremely sumptuous, the servants numerous, and, in short, rank and fortune are stamped on every part of his establishment. The Marchese apologized for his lady's not appearing this morning: I am to dine with him to-morrow; then, he told me I should see her. Every offer of civility has been made to me by the Marchese; amongst which I am best pleased by a general invitation to his house, as I think him a man whose society, on our becoming a little less formal acquaintance, I shall be much pleased with; and by his promise of

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of introducing me at his dinner to-morrow to some of the noblesse, as he styles them, for I am uncomfortable in any place where I have no acquaintance. An instrument stood in the room where I was received; I happened to notice it, and Paulina was immediately desired by her father to play and sing to me: you know I am no connoisseur in these matters, but I really spoke the truth when I declared myself pleased by her performance: she warbled an Italian air with so great sweetness, that I absolutely thought myself in a castle of enchantment while she was singing.

I have not been here long enough yet to regard those points in which this place differs from others, or excels them, as any other than the works of romance. I am going to the opera to-night. Adieu: I shall now send off my letter, lest you should think me neglectful, and hesitate whether to believe me

Your sincere friend, &c.

CHARLES MELFORD.



LETTER XIV.

Sir Charles Melford to Major Seymour.

DEAR SEYMOUR,

Venice, Thursday.

AS you so particularly desired me to give you intelligence how I passed my time, I begin writing to you again, though only a day has passed since, I put my last letter to you into the post.

I dined

I dined yesterday, according to my appointment, at the Pallazo di Marvaldi. The Marchese grows still pleasanter than I even at first found him; every additional hour his society is enjoyed. The Marchesa is a most lovely woman: she possesses all that interest of face which so far exceeds regular beauty; an easy carriage, which displays well-turned limbs to delicate advantage; and there is a fascination in her voice, which makes every thing she says appear worth attending to: indeed, what she does say is not only a proof of an intelligent mind, but of a pure heart. Our party was small, and all men except the bewitching Marchesa and her daughter: I had the good fortune of sitting between them at dinner. In the evening it was proposed by the Marchese, that we should visit one of the theatres, and then take our tea in his private cassino in St. Mark's place. We no sooner entered the Opera-house than a crowd of admirers flocked round Paulina; and indeed it did not surprise me; for to almost every man but myself, I think, she must be very fascinating, as she is very handsome, though not in my stile of beauty. While our attention was disengaged from the stage, I conversed with the Marchesa: her conversation possessed all the lively vivacity of the French woman, but at the same time it was regulated by the most scrupulous modesty of an English matron. In our walk to the cassino—for, on account of the fineness of the evening, walking was preferred—I had the honour of her arm: the ease and even pleasure, with which the Marchese saw her slide it through mine, I own appeared strange to me as an Englishman; but when I considered myself merely in the light of an individual being, it brought to my mind a conviction of the implicit confidence, with which he beheld her,

her, and raised both husband and wife still higher, in my opinion. Almost all the young noblemen who had been fluttering round Paulina at the opera escorted her to the casino; some left the party when we entered it, others remained to pay their devoirs when opposition became less violent.

I found all my new acquaintance extremely polite, and many of them very agreeable: a young Frenchman, the Marquis de Belleterre, particularly pleases me; he is one of the warmest votaries at the shrine of Paulina.

Eleven o'clock at night.

I WAS this morning in doubt about a matter which has turned out to my wishes; I did not know whether to expect a familiar address to-day from those men who joined our party yesterday evening at the opera, as I only conversed with, but was not formally introduced to them: on meeting to-day in the public walk, they directly challenged my acquaintance. It would be much to the advantage of strangers methinks, and the reputation of the country, if that fashion were introduced a little more generally into England.

As I passed the casino of the Marchese di Marvaldi this evening I saw them assembled in it, and of course stepped in to make my bow to them: the Marchesa invited me to join the party: and, in faith, George, there was no saying nay to her, from a young fellow like me, who dares not give a moment's thoughts to the girls, and consequently must look up to the graver age for passing his time here pleasantly. The Marchesa di Marvaldi charms as much by her exquisite modesty as some women do by showing it is possible for them to lay it aside. If
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any woman whom I have seen since I left England could tempt me to be false to Margaretta, even for a moment of dalliance, it must be the Marchesa di Marvaldi : so congratulate me, George, upon my unstained love : for it would be irreligion to suspect that she would listen even to the sigh that breathed impurity. I am safe ; no other woman whom this city of love contains has made the slightest impression on my heart ; and in feeling something like affection for the Marchesa di Marvaldi, as I witness the happiness of her married state, and as I reflect upon her purity, I learn to value constancy.

At breakfast, Friday.

THE Marchiese di Marvaldi and his family are to-morrow engaged at a dining party, whither I cannot accompany them on account of an engagement I have made to visit the Marquis de Belletterre on that day : he lives in the same hotel with myself, and we are become intimate ; he appears an amiable young man. He informs me that he is of a good family, but that his fortune is small ; his love for Paulina has detained him now some months in Venice ; he thinks himself possessed of her affections, but fears to make a confession of his passion to her father on account of his inability to support her in the style of elegance in which she now lives. "How would an Englishman reconcile this difficulty ?" said he to me ; "how would you act under my circumstances ?"—"If Paulina's father were seventy, instead of forty," I replied, "I could counsel you ; as it is, I know not what advice to give you." The gay young Frenchman sighed ; and the next moment joined in the tune which a girl in the street was playing on her guitar. How characteristic of his country ! a Frenchman always strives to keep the air *gai* predominant. The Marquis is now in my room,

tells

tells me he is going to call upon the Marchese di Marvaldi, and invites me to walk with him, so I lay down my pen.

Nine in the evening.

WHEN we arrived at the Pallazo di Marvaldi this morning, we were told that the Marchese was just then particularly engaged, but would come to us in a few minutes. While we were waiting his coming, the Marquis de Belleterre stood musing over a song which lay open upon the piano-forte, and which I suppose Paulina had been playing. I had never been in the room into which we had now been shown since my first call, and was looking round at the pictures; over the chimney-piece hung the portrait of the Marchesa; as I stood with my eyes fixed upon it, "What an enchanting woman!" accidentally fell from my lips. The major-domo was at this moment crossing the room unseen by me, and on my speaking he replied, "Aye, truly she is, signor." I turned round and stared on being addressed by him; he smiled, bowed, and left the room. "Bernardo is very familiar," said I to the Marquis on our being again left alone. "He lived with the father of the Marchesa Laura di Marvaldi, and is very much attached to the family," answered the Marquis. The Marchese now entered, and our remarks were consequently at an end.—I should not have mentioned this trivial occurrence, had it not appeared so strange to me that the major-domo, in a house whose owner sets so high an estimate on the due regard being paid to rank, should join in conversation with his master's guests; I queried to myself, whether the old man had not a mind to ascertain if the English were equally tenacious of their rank as his Italian master.

Eleven o'clock.

I HAVE been walking an hour in Saint Mark's-place, and have withstood a most flattering tem-
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tation. The Marquis de Belletere and myself had just parted from a group of Italian gentlemen, and were recommencing our stroll, when an elegant masked female figure who met us said, "Signor Inglese;" and as she spoke she faltered in her pace, which had before been slow. I wished her good-night in her own language, and was walking on; the Marquis whispered me, "If you will not take a turn with the lady, I'll be your substitute." He immediately drew his arm out of mine, and turned round upon her, for she had stopped to observe us; she immediately fled on perceiving that it was the Marquis who was approaching her, and became lost in the crowd before he could overtake her. On returning to me, the Marquis complimented me upon the attractions of my English person, and our adventure passed off with a laugh, for we saw the unknown no more, though we took several turns of the square. Give me credit, George, for my forbearance, when so flattering an appeal was made to my vanity; confess that I should not have acted thus before I became acquainted with Margaretta.

Monday.

You will perceive that for the two last days I have not written a line.—Forgive me, George, but for the first time since we have called each other friend, I have hesitated whether or not to impart to you an accident that has befallen me. It is a strange, it is an unaccountable, and you, I fear, will think it an evil occurrence which I have to communicate to you.—But consider the matter coolly, reflect how I was circumstanced, and then be lenient in your judgment. You recollect that I told you that the Marchesa and Marchesa di Marvaldi, with their daughter, were the day before yesterday engaged at a party, whither

I was

I was prevented from accompanying them by an engagement I was under to the Marquis de Belletere. The nobleman whom they went to visit lives at some little distance from the city, and they were not to return till late in the evening. I dined, according to my appointment, with the Marquis; after dinner we looked in at two or three of the theatres, and after that we returned to Saint Mark's-place, when we reached the door of our hotel, the young Marquis excused himself from walking any longer, by saying he had letters to write, and went in: the evening was uncommonly fine, a bright moon-light added to the splendor of the scene, and determined me to remain some time longer in the air. I was taking my second turn of the square, and passing a spot where the shade of the houses darkened a few yards of ground in their front, when the same female who had addressed me the night before again accosted me in the same words. I was replying to her with the same indifference I had already done, and walking forward, when she caught hold of my coat, and, in a voice of which it immediately struck me that I had some kind of recollection, begged me "to stop a single instant." As I turned round on hearing these words, or rather disengage myself from her hold, she raised her mask, and, oh, Seymour! whose features do you think I distinctly beheld?—those of the enchanting Marchesa di Marvaldi.—I involuntarily started on beholding her. She directly replaced her mask, and said, "Signor, I have something of the utmost consequence to impart to you; pray step in here a few minutes." I was not half a dozen yards from the casino of the Marchese di Marvaldi when she first addressed me; I walked half the way towards it in listening to her last petition, and at the conclusion of it she was already in the casino.

fino. I had here a moment to reflect, that it was very odd what the Marchesa could have to say in private to me, and also to consider that it would be very rude in me to refuse her a hearing.

As soon as I was in the cassino she desired me, in a lively voice, to shut the door and come with her into the second apartment. I followed her into a small room, which received all its light from a candle burning on a table in the first apartment. The light was just sufficient for me to see her sit down upon a sofa, and for me to place myself by her without stumbling. Her mask covered only the upper half of her face, and I could just discern that she had not taken it off. As soon as I was seated, she began speaking: "Signor," she said, "you doubtless wonder at the invitation I have given you; indeed, except that I *am* now here with you,"—and as she spoke she placed her hand on mine,—“I could hardly give myself credit for its having passed my lips.—Signor,” she continued, after a moment's pause, “you bewitching young Englishmen are the admiration of all our Italian women: some can feel in silence, and be content to view perfection; my feelings are too candid, too warm, not to avow themselves to their inspirer.” As she ceased speaking, her hand, which had been before laid upon the back of mine, slid gently down to my fingers which I had encircled round my knee, and maintained its situation by a slight pressure.—Seymour, could you have drawn away your hand from the soft touch of inviting beauty?—I confess that I could not, though at that very moment I recollected the first time of my shaking hands with Margaretta.—“I suppose,” she went on, “that you imagined me gone with the Marchese and my daughter to the Count di P——’s; I feigned indisposition as an excuse for my remaining in Venice,

nice, that I might see you here :—feigned indifference, did I say ?—oh, no ! I actually felt it : I feel it still—every moment increases it ; for, till I found you, I sickened with the fear of not meeting you : and now, I know not whether to conclude your silence surprise, or that you return my affection for you with hatred.” In seating myself on the sofa, I had accidentally thrown one of my arms on its back, and on that the Marchesa, now leaned with her cheek almost touching mine. I could not yet speak ; my feelings were at enmity, and I durst not confide them to my tongue : conscience pleaded in favour of Margaretta ; passion leaned to the side of the Marchesa. “ I see you hate me,” she cried, in accents that bespoke her stifling her tears : “ oh, how have I been deceived in you ! I thought your heart warm, compassionate, tender ! Oh, how wicked of you, bel-signor Inglese, to wear such fascinating smiles with so hard a heart ! surely, though you have life, your heart must be cold and dead ; I cannot think that it beats.” As she said this, she passed her hand from its former situation upon mine to my breast. “ Yes.” she said with a sigh, “ it does beat indeed !”—she pressed upon it still harder, in order to feel its throbbing the plainer ; and the pressure of her hand on so susceptible a part, communicated a fire to my pulses, which agitated them beyond my reason, and I glued my lips upon hers ; she withdrew her face from its union with mine, with a tenderness that instead of discouraging provoked me to rejoin them. I was now far advanced in the path of pleasure to be able to retrace my steps, and the succeeding moments were moments of exquisite bliss. When we awoke from our mutual intoxication of passion, the Marchesa thus addressed me : “ Ah, signor, what must

must now be your opinion of me?—Oh, how weak is our sex!—how much weaker than any other of it am I!—By man alone we know happiness, and from man alone we experience misery! How eagerly do you all encourage us in our foibles, and then how ready are ye to laugh at our weaknesses!—But indeed I believe you, signor Carlo, too noble, too generous, to be such a deceiver." It was impossible, after what had passed between us, for me to do any otherwise than declare I merited her highest opinion of my honour. She continued: "Signor, I am not so lost, so profligate, as my conduct may have led you to imagine; it is true I saw you, from the first moment of my beholding you, with the eye of preference; but I have no other, weightier reasons for the humiliation to which I have stooped.—I am distracted, my thoughts are bewildered—I would say a great deal, yet know not where to begin, and almost fear to speak at all.—You do not pity me;—I cannot expect you should." These words were so feelingly marked by the distress of her mind, that I really did feel compassion for her, and I told her so in accents that seemed to reassure her. She threw her arms round my neck, and while she held me in strict embrace, said, "Oh, signor, you know not to what misery my imprudence has reduced me, and you alone have it in your power to give ease to my miserable heart; in the name of God, I entreat you to swear what I shall require of you." This was a strange demand, and I replied, "that I must desire to know to what I was going to swear, before I bound myself by an oath."—"I am sure you will not hesitate to take it," she returned, "when you shall know what is the substance of it. From many reasons which are no doubt apparent to you, and from still more which I alone know, you must perceive

perceive how necessary it is that the conduct of us both should be most scrupulous in concealing that we have this evening met." With this assertion I readily agreed. The Marchesa continued: "This point granted, how cautiously ought we to avoid betraying ourselves by any nod, wink, or smile, which the recollection of past pleasures might tempt us to use towards each other on any future meeting: yet, signor, I do not fear being thrown off my guard; I have reasons that compel me to keep my every word, gesture, and muscle, under subjection, to the appearance of extreme propriety; but you are differently situated to myself, and in a moment when you least suspect it, when you think yourself and me most secure, you might betray us both to certain destruction. This may be avoided by the means I shall propose, and I think, for my sake, you will not refuse to use them.—Swear, that whenever we shall see each other, in whatsoever place, in company, or entirely alone, whether upon the square, or in the house of the Marchese di Marvaldi; or if it were possible for us to meet on some heath where our eyes could take in the extent of leagues without beholding one human being—swear, that not even there, either by the slightest insinuation given by look, word, or gesture, you will recur to what has this hour passed between us. This request appeared to me but a natural consequence of the conduct which had preceded it, and I bound myself without hesitation to follow her rules for my behaviour. In a few minutes she again went on: "How infinitely depraved must I appear to you! yet, signor, on my truth, I am not so much to blame in the step I have taken as you may imagine me to be: I am, perhaps, the most miserable woman who exists. I am not attempting entirely to exculpate my present conduct; I would only say

say (in spite of me the words compel my tongue to utter them), that if I possessed the affection of the Marchese di Marvaldi, I should be all I ought to be : if any desires beyond those for which it would be lawful for me to seek gratification, with his knowledge, then obtruded themselves into my thoughts, I would banish them from my heart, from my head, as decided vices ; but I am not that happy woman, the Marchese di Marvaldi hates me ; oh, ungenerous, cruel, vile man ! destroyer of my peace ! subverter of my virtue !”

What an extraordinary declaration did this appear to me, after the many apparent proofs of mutual affection which I had witnessed between the Marchesa and her husband ; and I immediately mentioned to her my thoughts. “ Are there no men in the world, think you,” she answered, “ whose deceitful conduct gains for them their desired ends ?”—She sighed, and stopped. I recollected the complacency with which the Marchese had seen her hang on my arm, in our walk from the theatre to his casino, and I now thought differently of his conduct than I had before done ; “ his indifference about being himself her protector,” I now thought, “ plainly argues how little tenderness he feels for her.” Thus are our ideas on an undecided subject always regulated by the plausibility of the last action, or observation referring to it. “ What are his reasons for this conduct ?” I asked : did he marry you under this dislike which you express him to feel for you, or has any recent circumstance caused him to contract it ?”

—“ Signor,” she replied, “ he hated me long, long before he became a husband.”—“ Why then did he marry ?” I returned. “ Do not ask me that,” she replied, stifling her tears. “ Oh, Albert,” she continued, after a momentary silence, “ had you but loved me as I do you !”—again she stopped.

stopped. "Love him!" I exclaimed; "is it possible you *do* love him?"—"Witness Heaven, how very, very tenderly I love him!" she cried, and again sunk upon my neck. "What strange contradictions meet in this woman's mind," I could hardly help uttering. Pressing both my hands in hers with an energy superior to any she had before appeared to feel, she said, "My extremest humiliation is not yet confessed to you:—oh, signor, pity me! I conjure you pity a woman distressed as you behold me! do not let contempt for me succeed the moments just passed; do not now despise her whom you had just before clasped to your heart!—Signor—oh, would to Heaven the hard task could be spared me!—Signor, I entreat you to give me—You will hate me if I speak it," she cried, "and I have not fortitude to draw upon myself your displeasure." I besought her to speak without reserve. "You will pardon me then," she said, "if even you refuse to grant me what I ask you." Returning the pressure which her hand challenged from mine, "Tell me," I replied, "what is it?"—"Your—" she answered, and once more hesitated. "Name it," I said. With difficulty she faltered out, "your purse."—On this declaration a thousand conjectures, which I had not at that moment time to investigate, floated in my brain, and I put my purse, containing about twenty English pounds in Italian money, into her hand. "I can only thank you—God reward you," she said, as she received it: "oh, what a life of anxiety, disgust, mortification, and suspense, has been, is, and ever will be mine!—Do not I, signor, appear to you a most incomprehensible being?" I confessed I thought her mysterious. "I am mysterious," she replied; "but the time may come—*may* come!" she repeated with emphasis, "it shall come, when I shall

I shall stand explained to you and the world; meanwhile, believe me, I shall always, whatever may be our separate fate, think most of you.” —“It was,” she again went on, with the most extreme difficulty that I yesterday evening contrived to walk out alone; it is at a still greater hazard that I am now from home: I have one friend in the house of the Marchese di Marvaldi; —but no matter, a word of explanation ruins me for ever.—I talk of ruin, and forget the danger that may now be impending me: The Marchese and his daughter may be already returned from the Count di P——’s: you must leave me.—Shall we ever meet again?” —“I dine with you tomorrow by appointment,” I replied. “That is not meeting,” she returned; it is only being together without enjoying each other’s society: will you ever pass another hour in private with me, if opportunity should favour us?” Impelled by curiosity—for, believe me, Seymour, that passion had almost entirely subdued the one which had a short time before possessed me—I answered, “Yours must be the determination.” —“Let this answer you,” she said, and kissed my cheek. “Let our agreement be mutually signed,” I cried, and pressed my lips upon hers. She then rose and said, “With reluctance I bid you go; remember your vow, all that is dear to me hangs upon your observance of that solemn promise.” —“I remember and repeat it,” I answered. “I conjure you, by Heaven, to repeat it formally,” she said. “Do you doubt me, Marchesa?” I asked. “No, not doubt you,” she answered; “but it would be an extreme satisfaction to me to hear, that you remember all its points.” I then said, “I swear, by Heaven, that whenever we shall see each other, in whatever place, whether in company or entirely alone, whether upon the square

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an evening, or in the house of the Marchese di Marvaldi; or if it were possible for us to meet on some heath where our eyes could take in the extent of leagues without beholding one human being—I swear, that not even there, by the slightest insinuation, given by look, word, or gesture, I will recur to what has passed between us.”—
 “For on that heath,” cried she, taking up my word and the voice in which I had uttered them—“nay, even were we two upon the sea in an open boat, without a speck of aught but water in our view—destruction might follow to us both from your being the first to speak upon this sad yet exquisite theme.” My surprise increased, but by continuing to speak, she prevented me from expressing it. “Now leave me,” she said, “but go not to-night to the Marchese di Marvaldi’s, nor, I conjure you, forget sometimes to think of me.” She had, during these words, led me to the door of the casino, and I rushed out almost as insensibly as I had walked in.

I immediately went to the hotel, entered my room, and threw myself into a chair, that I might reflect on what appeared to me almost a dream. The beautiful, the accomplished, the apparently most modest and most virtuous Marchesa di Marvaldi; the only woman who had in the least touched my heart since my leaving England; the woman, who, of all others, had appeared most unlikely to be false to a man who seemed the best of husbands, had voluntarily thrown herself into my arms; had declared that her husband hated her, that he had hated her before they were married, and still had made her his wife: that she, notwithstanding, loved him most affectionately, but yet sought for pleasure in the society of another man, and then stooped to ask his purse as her reward!—How could I unriddle this unaccountable

ble conduct?—Sometimes I thought the Marchese compelled her to increase his income by submitting herself to the pleasure of strangers: this idea was refuted by the ardor with which she had solicited my attention; because, to any man whose heart was not, like my own, engaged to another object, little solicitation, on so tender a point, would doubtless have been necessary from the Marchesa Laura. She said, “she had one friend in the house of the Marchese di Marvaldi;” this seemed also to imply that she had but one; and that one, after the words which had fallen from the major-domo Bernardo, and the Marquis de Belleterre’s assertion of his being attached to the family of the Marchesa, I could not doubt to be him. I began to consider whether the attentions of the Marchese to me, and the high terms in which he always spoke of the English, might not be intended as blinds to make me a prey to his wife, without suspicion falling upon himself: but then again the known respectability of my Paris banker, who had given me the letter which had introduced me to the Marchese, spoke strongly against his being a man of the nature I had for a moment imagined he might be; besides, his establishment, and repute of wealth, appeared such great contradictions of his standing in need of the paltry sum which his wife had received from me with so great apparent thankfulness, that the idea of my being intended to be made a dupe to his convenience soon vanished from my thoughts. Again I imagined that if the Marchese really hated the Marchesa, and had married her, as it was natural for me to believe from her words, from motives of interest, he might, perhaps, from his dislike of her, refuse her an allowance suited to her station, and compel her thus, unknown to him, to provide

side herself with the means of procuring many articles which former custom had taught her now to consider as comforts : there are many things of which we do not feel the value till we are deprived of them ; and this might be the present case of the Marchesa, who, by her own confession, was suffering under the hatred of the Marchese, and yet constrained to appear fully satisfied with her situation. That she is involved in a mystery, she herself acknowledges ; it also appears that she wishes to reveal it, but that she is bound to secrecy by some tie which she has not courage to break through. What can it be ? And then, the most extraordinary of all, whence can arise the solemn injunction by which she has obliged me never to mention to her what she calls " the sad but exquisite theme," though convinced that we are neither seen nor heard by mortal eye or ear, and though she has promised to find an opportunity of renewing it herself ?—Perhaps, if I really have any influence over her heart, it is, that she fears my betraying her, at some unguarded moment, into the confession of the secret which is struggling within her ; and that, if the season of our private conferences be left entirely to herself, she may have an opportunity of selecting such moments as she feels herself able to resist my enquiries.—To cease conjecturing myself I cannot at the times when I am alone, but it matters little writing to you all my surmises, as they are probably none of them exact.

Well, George, now let me say a few words of Margareta. Perhaps you will think it a bold assertion, but I do not believe that the voice of purity itself could say, I have wronged her : my love for her is as ardent, as it was before, and it is as pure ; for love had no concern in my affair with the Marchesa Laura, with her they were merely

merely corporeal feelings which experienced a momentary union; but my mental feelings must be knit with those of Margareta to produce the pure happiness I anticipate in calling her wife. I think a good deal of the Marchesa to be sure, but I think of her as I might do of a new horse, house, or book—as an object which will afford me pleasure for the time whenever opportunity serves me to receive it. To Margareta I look up as the rest from every care, as the being whose endearments shall throw into shade and oblivion every past and futile enjoyment, and who, when I am thus perfected, shall wing her way with me to bliss, even superior to that I have tasted with her on earth.

I know you will be anxious to learn whether I have seen the Marchesa since the evening I have described in this letter: I dined on the following day at the pellazo; the party was select; she entered the room after I arrived, and spoke to me the first of the guests: she does not paint, and yet not a drop of blood mounted into her cheeks, or faded from them when her complaisant eyes rested on mine.—What am I to think?—I wonder what she thought, when she first looked at me, for I felt my face burn, and immediately after I had spoken, I recollected that I had answered, “Very fultry indeed,” to her enquiry after my health.—I have generally attached myself in conversation more to the Marchesa than to her husband; yesterday I felt irresistibly drawn to converse most with him. When we entered the dining-room, the Marchesa called me to sit by her; I thought this rather an extraordinary attention just at the present time, but received the invitation with a bow, and took my place: some little hesitation ensued about seating the rest of the company, and the only other lady having placed herself on the other side

of the table, the Marchese told his daughter to go and sit next his English friend." Paulina obeyed; the Marquis de Belleterre looked irresolute whether he might be permitted to become her other neighbour; and whilst he hesitated where to place himself, a German baron, less troubled with diffidence than the well-bred young Frenchman, placed himself on her other side.— During dinner, I talked much more to Paulina than to the Marchesa; the Marchese frequently joined in our topics, and seemed more pleased and in better spirits than I had ever seen him; the Marchesa often spoke to me, and I endeavoured to address her exactly as I had done previous to our private meeting, always fearing I was too forward, or too reserved. The remainder of the day passed without any material occurrence. This day I have seen no one of the family.

Write to me, my dear Seymour, as soon as you receive this; admonish me, but not with severity; I do not condemn myself, and yet I fear not to be approved by you. This is a long letter indeed, I have filled five sheets without knowing I had written a page.—Adieu, and believe me sincerely your devoted friend, &c.

—CHARLES MELFORD.

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LETTER XV.

Margaretta Hayton to Sir Charles Melford.

Rose-bank cottage.

Silent IN what language shall the orphan of his bounty venture to address her benefactor?—On upon what subject will her heart allow her to speak, but upon the gratitude which she owes to his generous protection? When present with her, it has been his constant command that she should never express to him those feelings with which her heart overflows; in every particular it is her wish, as she feels it her duty, to obey him; but now in his absence from her, while every comfort she is enjoying constantly reminds her from whom she derives it, and she has no other means than words left her of showing him that she is not insensible to the tacit admonitors around her, she cannot forbear slightly hazarding his displeasure, by letting her thanks fall from her pen, if they are only allowed to say with what pleasure she has received information of his welfare and happiness from the letters with which he has honoured her during his absence from England.

You desire me, Sir Charles, to tell you how I am employed: my hours are principally passed in pursuing to the best of my abilities, those studies upon which you had placed me before your departure; but I fear I am a bad pupil, and give little credit to the pains of an able master; for now alone, I am often at a loss how to proceed in many points to the advantage I think I should be able to do if you were here to resolve me questions that I am frequently obliged to repress when

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they rise in my mind, because I have no one to whom I can address them.

You have several times requested me to write to you, and I at length have complied, because I regard this submission to your wishes the only return I can make to you for your generous prevention of my wants; no other consideration should have induced me to hazard exposing my little competency to the task, after the many hours you have liberally spent in endeavouring to fit me for its performance, and more especially to address on the terms of familiarity, which a correspondence unavoidably seems to lay to the charge of those who maintain it, one whom, notwithstanding his extreme condescension and kindness to me, I can never consider, but as a being placed in so very different a situation of life to myself.—Indeed I am almost ashamed of myself for having granted you this request, nor could I permit this sheet to reach you, but that I could not explain to you my motive for not complying with your wish, and that I despair of executing one more to my own satisfaction, little as these lines express the sensations with which it is my desire to prove to you that they were written.

Mrs. Wallace desires me to present her most respectful compliments to you, and begs me to tell you, that her son Edward is on his voyage from America, and expected very shortly to arrive in this country.

I hope you are experiencing every pleasure which you anticipated from your present journey; that every earthly bliss may attend you wherever you go, is the sincere prayer of her whom your goodness has left no wish but the happiness of him who has constituted that of his devoted servant.

MARGARETTA HAYTON.

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LETTER

LETTER XVI.

Sir Charles Melford to Major Seymour.

DEAR SEYMOUR.

Venice.

I DO not wait your answer to my last epistle before I write again to you, in order to keep a promise I made you some time ago, of sending to you the first letter I should have from Margaretta; the inclosed I yesterday evening received; read it, and then judge whether I am not justified in loving such a girl! With what extacy have I perused the lines it contains! with what transports read her first efforts at addressing a man whom her innocence has hitherto taught her to know only as a benefactor, and to revere only for the warmth of his feelings towards her distress!—Oh, Seymour, how extremely am I deceived, or with what happy ease may love be planted amidst the soft passions which now fill her heart!—Adieu, I am but just in time for the post: nothing material has occurred here since I wrote last; when any thing does spring up, depend on hearing from me, and believe me,

Yours sincerely, &c.

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

Sir Charles Melford to Major Seymour.

DEAR GEORGE,

Venice.

AS several days have past since I wrote to you last, and I have yet received no answer from you, I again resume my pen. — Well, Seymour, the Marchesa spoke the truth when she affirmed that she would neither by gesture or muscle revert to the past in public; and in private I have not seen her since that notable evening. — *Her* firmness too has given *me* courage, for I do not now see her with those inexpressible feelings with which I beheld her the last time of my dining with her at the pallazo, which was the day after our private rencontre.

I have taken some pains whenever opportunity has presented itself for enquiring, as much as the pretence of accidental discourse would allow me to do, into the circumstances of the Marchese in order to learn whether I could find any ground for the conduct of his wife. — I had yesterday a party of young men at my hotel; a violent cold prevented the Marquis de Belleterre from making one of the party; as he was absent, I ventured to speak of Paulina, as an introduction to her father; the conversation was thus begun: after dinner, when the society became rather lively, a young Italian of fashion, the Count di Rebini, said, “I would marry to-morrow if I could meet with a pretty girl and a handsome fortune.” — “Then, Signor,” said I, “I should suppose the daughter of the Marchese di Mar-

Marvaldi the very girl to your taste."—"She is certainly a very handsome woman, and her father's property very large," answered the Italian gravely. "Since you think so," I returned, "give me leave to announce her to the company as your toast." He smiled, but did not answer; and one of his intimate acquaintance at table, hearing what I had said, immediately began contradicting my mistake, as he called it, by informing me of a famous opera girl who at that time received the favours of the Count di Rebini; all tongues now began to sound the praises of the dancer, to the no small pleasure, as I perceived of the young Italian, and I had no second opportunity of mentioning Paulina or her family.

When my guests were gone, I could not forbear reflecting on the words of the Count; he had said, that he wished to marry a handsome woman with a good fortune; he had allowed Paulina to be possessed both of beauty and fortune, and he had spoken his avowal in a tone which had evidently implied that, notwithstanding the double charm, he would not become her husband.—The more I thought upon his expression, and his tone of voice at the time he made it, the more I was convinced that some secret meaning lurked beneath his words, but I was unable to define what it might be.

Tuesday morning.

I HAVE just been walking on the square: the Count de Rebini joined me; he took my arm, and after we had made three or four turns, he said, "You bantered me yesterday, Signor Carlo, about the daughter of the Marchise de Marvaldi; you were cunning, you had an inclination, I suppose to hear my sentiments." I knew not what his words meant and wished him to explain them to me. "Come, come," said

he after some time, "confess candidly at once;
 I have heard from more than one to-day, that you
 are the destined husband of Paulina di Marvaldi."
 —"Upon my honour," I replied, "your infor-
 mation is untrue: whence could you derive it?"
 —"From common report," he answered. I
 now thought him joking, and said with a smile,
 "That common report gave me an honour I was
 undeserving of."—"Are you really serious?" he
 returned, in a tone of surprise; "for setting ba-
 dinage and common report aside, I have actually
 heard to-day, from two different persons, that
 you are about to marry the daughter of the Mar-
 chese di Marvaldi; nay, one of them asserted
 that he had heard the Marchese himself say, that
 it would give him exquisite pleasure to see his
 daughter the wife of his English friend, as he of-
 ten calls you."—"I am obliged to him for his
 good opinion," I replied; "but upon my word,
 as I am entirely ignorant myself about this affair, I
 must be rather incredulous as to this speech of the
 Marchese."—"I did not hear him say so," an-
 swered Count Rebini, "and Venice is no more
 free from the creators of news than other places;
 but tell me, Signor Carlo, are you really indif-
 ferent to Paulina?"—"In the point of the heart,
 I am totally so," I replied. "Do not deceive
 me," said Count Rebini, "for I wish to be your
 friend."—"I have spoken the truth," I returned.
 "Then let me strongly advise you," rejoined he,
 "whilst you continue an intimate at her father's
 house, to steel your heart resolutely against enter-
 taining a passion for her."—"I have a private
 reason," I replied smiling, "which will secure
 me from any such passion; but why this caution,
 Signor?"—"After what I have said to you," he
 answered, "I think you must be so sufficiently
 convinced that I have meant well to you, as to
 ensure

8 ensure your not repeating what I confide to you."
 —“Depend on me,” I returned. “The daughter of the Marchese di Marvaldi, I grant,” said he, “is a woman whom every man would not be permitted by her father to marry; but, signor, she is notwithstanding a woman whom every man would not marry.”—“I am curious for your explanation of these hints,” cried I. “In the first place he rejoined, and suddenly becoming silent, he ~~snatched~~ nipped my arm as a sign to prevent my speaking; I immediately looked round to find out the cause of his breaking off, and saw the Marchese di Marvaldi approaching us. I felt disappointed that he had joined us, though the subject which the Count di Ribini and I had been conversing upon had more excited my curiosity than interest. The Marchese directly joined in our walk, and in course a fresh topic of conversation was introduced. In the course of our stroll he invited us both to dine at his house to-morrow, which invitation we both accepted; I was then in momentary expectation of his leaving us, but, to my disappointment, an acquaintance of the Count’s coming up and whispering him, he immediately wished us a good night, and left the square. “Have you known the Count de Ribini long?” asked the Marchese. “I was introduced to him,” I replied, “the first time I had the honour of dining at your house.” —“Oh, I recollect,” said the Marchese; “he is an agreeable companion, but a dangerous friend: not that he intends harm to any one, but his spirits give him a volubility of tongue which renders him unable to conceal whatever he knows, and often leads him to paint what he does know in higher colours than it has been represented to him: one who talks continually must have recourse to scandal to please all with whom he converses; and the embellishments of a second reciter

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ter upon any fact are often disagreeable in their consequences to the innocent state of it. I merely mention this in confidence to you, that your ingenious disposition may not bring you into any dilemma through the means of a man who does not think before he speaks ; I mean to say nothing more severe of the Count di Rebini, as I believe him in heart to be well principled, but too quick and unguarded in his communications and observations." We now parted, and I returned to my hotel.

What am I to think of all this ?—Am I to set it down as the effect of chance or design ? What could the Count di Rebini be going to tell me of the Marchese or his daughter ? Is it possible he can know any thing of the private conduct of the Marchesa ? and, if he did, how does this affect her daughter ?—Or, what interest can this man have in wishing me not to marry her ? for, as we have seen each other but a few times, his anxiety surely cannot be on my account. Neither certainly can the Marchese have said, that he wished me to be his son-in-law ; it cannot be ; if even he had entertained such a wish, which I do not believe he has, he would beyond all doubt have hinted it to me before he mentioned it to the world. Perhaps the Count is, as the Marchese represented him to me, a walking chronicle of scandal ; if so, what signifies what he says ? However, I am determined, if I can get him alone to-morrow, to hear the conclusion of his story, be it what it may. How often does one person of known improper conduct cause those with whom he is connected to fall under like suspicion ? I have had proof that the Marchesa can conquer scruples ; is it not possible that her husband may be of an equally complaisant conscience ? and, perhaps, as I before thought, in league with her ?

her? perhaps with the Count di Ribini! but to what end I cannot think; these cannot be the means for instigating me to make an offer of marriage to his daughter. I cannot think—at least I cannot write my thoughts any longer to-night.

Wednesday.

As soon as I rise this morning I find an epistle from you, containing, as I suppose, an acknowledgment of the receipt of the little volume which I sent off to you some time ago. I know the strictness with which you regulate your own conduct, and the justice with which you censure any deviation from the straight path of morality, to wander in the enticing groves of pleasure; and from these considerations I almost fear to peruse the sheet now before me, with the seal just broken. I have some-where read, "that the truly good and wise man views with an eye of candour the frailties of his less perfect fellow-creature, and that it is only from the arrogant pretender to exalted qualities that rigid censure ever falls on lenient errors;" with this sentence in my recollection, I cannot be so unjust to my friend as another instant to defer perusing his letter without fear. But it shall be on a fresh sheet of paper that I acknowledge the truth of the arguments which I am well aware your tacit, but eloquent, representative is about to give to my consideration; so for the present adieu.

Yours, &c.

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

Major Seymour to Sir Charles Melford.

MY DEAR CHARLES,

London.

I AM not twelve months older than yourself, nor is my disposition of a very much graver cast than your own, and yet I begin to apprehend that you will disclaim all future correspondence with me, and give me the title of a surly admonisher against the pleasures of life, because I may myself happen to have no taste for their enjoyment.— But if you do this, you are mistaken in your opinion of me; no man meets pleasure with more eagerness than I do, but then I meet her where the road to her is clear, and I strictly avoid all intercourse with her in those cross paths of temptation which, when entered, are hung with roses, but which must be retraced over the thorns left visible by the withering of the flowers. This life is not the insignificant trifle which many wish to make it appear; it is no doubt convenient to such whose minds are not sufficiently refined to feel that superlative happiness is in superlative virtue to say, that it is immaterial whether we act our part in it well or ill; and this is the real cause of numerous vices being dressed in specious names, put on them by evil-intended men, and received with avidity as their true meanings by that part of the multitude who have not sufficient sense to look farther than the name, or sufficient fortitude to correct their own evil and delusively pleasant actions. You have studied mankind; have you never studied that most subtle of its machinations,

intentioned?

that constant moral abuse of terms, which glosses over bad actions with soft titles. What is the man who kills his antagonist in a duel?—a murderer. What is he who takes the life of his fellow-creature on the high-road?—a murderer. Both these men are equally amenable to the laws of their country; yet the one flies from justice by flying his country, and lives applauded by the majority; the other, when dying by the hand of the executioner, is thought to receive only his due punishment. And why are these two opinions thus supported?—Because the first murder is called a point of honour:—honour ranks on the side of good; the perpetrator, therefore, of this good deed must gain applause from all good men. The second is called a villainous action:—villainy ranks on the side of evil; the perpetrator, therefore, of this evil deed must be execrated by all but evil men. And yet there is not a shadow of difference in the immorality of the conduct of these two men; the only difference lies in the names given by the world to their actions. Thus has every vice been softened by fashion, or custom, which is the same thing, till the most heinous offences against morality are hardly considered deviations from the straight rule of virtue. Of war you have already had my opinion. The ambitious and intemperate man, whose doors are thrown open to a tribe of profligate sycophants, and whose tables groan beneath the equal splendor and luxury of his feast, let it be procured at the expence of unpaid and perhaps starving tradesmen; at the expence of his children's future welfare; at the expence of some unhappy orphan, with whose guardianship and property a deceived parent has entrusted him; or by any means even more nefarious than these (and blacker arts are practised for such ends), is honoured with the name of generous

generous and hospitable. The unfixed mind, which dips alternately, and without a preference of its own, into the petty immoralities which disgrace even the heroism of error, is applauded for its good-nature; and the unformed mind, which, confused between false ideas of principle and the alluring temptations of vice, endeavours to trample down the barriers of religion, and establish a code of morality suited to his own disposition, gains the praise of manly spirit. The most rapid violators of honesty, honour, and that ^{you} ought to subsist between man and man, are justified with the appellation of industrious endeavourers to thrive. And to seduce the wife of a friend, or to meet her half-way when her conduct bespeaks her willing through the solemn vows of fidelity which she has sworn to her husband, is an abuse of moral virtue under the gentle name of gallantry: it is a vice rendered so specious by being too much connived at by the world in general, that even the virtuously inclined may fall into the crime without considering the extent of their error. Their eyes may not be immediately open to the excessive domestic infelicity, personal turpitude, remorse of conscience, and even injury to the unconnected in it, which such conduct may produce; they may not, in their first warmth of passion, perceive that, whatever the name, the vice remains the same; that however they may for a while colour the prospects before them with the vivid tints of pleasure, if that pleasure be immoral, the time will come when the sparkling lights will fade, and truth only will be left them for reflection. One consideration above all, on what I have written, gives me satisfaction; it is, that although a man of sense may err once from warmth of passion or want of just consideration at any particular moment, his error being once pointed out to him by the

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the redawning of his reason, he will not repeat an action which conscience whispers him is an equal degradation of the powers of his head and his heart.

I think that, ere this paper reaches you, the month which you thought would answer your purpose at Venice will be expired. Adieu ; I shall be happy in receiving a letter from you dated from some new residence.

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

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LETTER XIX.

Major Seymour to Sir Charles Melford,

London.

I wrote to you, my dear Charles, only four days ago ; but having within the last hour received the sheet which brings me the first confirmation I gain of your Margaretta's worth from any channel of communication but your own pen, I cannot forbear sitting down to ask you, how, with virtuous happiness thus in your power, you could ever for a moment trifle with the shadow of felicity reflected on your dazzled senses by wanton pleasure ? That you are not insensible to the worth of Margaretta, is no matter of surprise to me ; that you can for a moment have suffered her to lose her hold upon your heart, does astonish me. When I say this, I do not mean to vouch for her personal charms, because I have received a proof of her good sense ; of those

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can know nothing but from your account of them : I only wish to lead you back to reflections which you have yourself taught me once filled your breast ; reflections of the virtuous felicity you may, when you please, enjoy in an union with Margaretta. It is true, that your love for her is yet a secret to all but yourself and me ; and so is your adventure with the Marchesa di Marvaldi ; and I allow that this adventure does not actually injure Margaretta ; but still would you, if you were to-morrow to offer your hand to her, and to lay open to her what had for ~~some~~ ^{some} time past been the state of your heart with regard to her—would you inform her of this occurrence ? Would you avow to her that, at the moment in which you were looking forward to the expectation of obtaining the honourable possession of her person, in addition to the confidence of her excellent heart, you had humbled your feelings to the receiving gratification from the preference of a woman deliberately wanton, in those very points which you particularly esteem Margaretta for regarding with the most rigorous nicety ?—Then consider again, that though she does not know the passion you entertain for her, you know it yourself, and thus ought equally to act in conformity to its support as if it were known to all the world. If a man does not maintain a strict consistency in his private conduct, he can never be happy within himself ; and there is a fear that inward feelings of mutability will communicate themselves to his outward actions, and render him in the eyes of the world less respectable than he might otherwise appear.

Charles, I did not intend to have expressed my sentiments with the warmth which I find, on revising my letter, I have done ; but I will not, now it is once penned, efface what I have written :
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receive it, as it truly is, the admonition of my "heart's care," when warmed by the exquisite innocence of your Margareta's letter. And now, what should you think, if I were to say, that I believe myself much nearer a state of married happiness than you are? I have not known my mistress so long as you have yours, it is true; but I have known her a sufficient time to have learnt that I can be happy with her, and to have discovered that she has no objection to taking her chance for being so with me: nothing is wanting to make our union certain, but the consent and approbation of my Emma's mother; and, without her sanction, the amiable girl refuses to give me her hand. Mrs. Hughford is a widow, at a very advanced age, and resides at an old family mansion in Cumberland, in the vicinity of the lakes:—Emma is at this time on a visit to a friend of her's who is nearly related to my brother Sir Oliver's wife, and thus the frequent intercourse of the families has given us the opportunity of establishing an intimacy which promises every happiness. Mrs. Hughford has not for many years travelled beyond the borders of her own estate and as Emma with propriety, insists on not entering into an indissoluble engagement with a man unknown to her parent, Mr. and Mrs. Amherst, at whose house she now is, are to carry her down into Cumberland, and I have her permission to follow them to lodgings in the village of Kirton, in which Mrs. Hughford resides. Emma and her party set out to-morrow; I shall begin my journey on the succeeding day, so let your next letter be directed for me in Cumberland. Adieu, dear Charles, and believe me,

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.
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LETTER XX:

Sir Charles Melford to Major Seymour.

Venice, Wednesday.

I KNOW, my dear Seymour, that the date of this letter will not raise me in your opinion; but do not judge too hastily; hear my reason for being still on this spot before you condemn me. Is it not more praise-worthy to remain here, and to shew myself able to withstand the temptations into which you fear I should fall, than by immediately leaving the place, to avow that my nature is too feeble to resist the adulation of pleasureable seduction? Indeed, from this reflection, I have persuaded myself that it will be a most excellent lesson of forbearance for my future life, that I should continue here some time longer, and at the same time regulate my actions by the strictest rules of virtue. I am in earnest George, with regard to the regulation of my conduct; I can in one sentence convince you that I am so;—mark these words;—Margaretta is as dear to me as ever. I have had no private invitation again from the Marchesa, and the affair begins to lose its hold on my recollection. I intended, as you may remember that I wrote you, to have found an opportunity of talking apart with the Count di Rebini, the last time of dining in my company with him at the Palazzo di Marvaldi. The common curiosity of any stranger, when it had been ^{raised} ~~raised~~ as the Count had excited mine by his ill-omened hints relative to the Marvaldi family, I thought, authorised me to this, notwithstanding I felt the full force of the arguments contained in your letters; but, however, I had not the opportunity
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given me, for the Count had been suddenly called to visit some of his estates in Tuscany, and had apologised for not keeping his appointment.

My time has lately passed very pleasantly, though unmarked by an occurrence, worthy of being written to you. I cannot sometimes forbear wondering what it could be that the Count was on the point of disclosing to me; and surely you will not condemn me for amusing myself with my thoughts so long as I confine myself to those; and yet, perhaps, you may say, they are the fosterers of many improprieties, which would never be committed if we compelled ourselves to hold the seat of reflection occupied only by pure ideas; at least, that if any others by chance obtruded themselves, we opposed to them a power of argument calculated to dispel their influence;—this, I dare say, you think, and thus far, I dare say, you consider the giving of our thoughts too wide a licence, a moral irregularity. Well, George, I know you are generally in the right, and as I cannot help imagining this to be your opinion, I endeavour to make it operate as a command from you on my reflection, when too warm in bringing to my remembrance that I have enjoyed pleasure in the private society of the Marchesa Laura.

Sunday.

WELL, George, my pen you perceive has been idle for the three last days; and indeed it needs having had rest to render it adequate to the task which it is now going to undertake.—More enigmas have started up in the Pallazo di Marvaldi and I feel my heart stout to relate them to you, as I have, I am sure, acted in them with honour.—The Marchese di Marvaldi has a remarkably fine edition of Tasso in the original language, enriched with many beautiful plates;

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plates ; he mentioned it to me some time ago by accident ; I expressed a wish to see it, and he invited me to come on any morning which suited my own pleasure, and look over it at my leisure, in his library. Yesterday morning according I went to the pallazo for this purpose ; the Marchese was not at home when I arrived there ; and the major-demo, old Bernardo, learning the errand of my call, conducted me into the library. It is a large and elegant room, with books ranged on either side, and terminating in a glass bow, or oratory, looking upon the water ; in this are sofas and tables for the convenience of readers ; and it is likewise divided from the other part of the room by folding curtains of silk ; hither in general the Marchese retires to take his siesto. I took the book I came to peruse from its shelf, and sat down by accident on a sofa before which part of the curtain was drawn. I had not been many minutes seated, before a light step in the room drew my attention from the book ;—the Marchesa it was, and she entered the oratory ; on seeing me, she started, and said, “ Ah, Signor Carlo, is it you ? good morning to you, I thought my husband had been here.”—I returned her salute, and rose, as I spoke, from my seat.—“ Pray sit still, and amuse yourself,” she returned, “ I am not coming to interrupt you, I want to find the Marchese ;” with a courteous inclination of the head she left me and I resumed my seat. She had scarcely reached the door of the library, when I heard the voice of the Marchese in the gallery ; he was coming towards the library : the Marchesa slackened her step, and met him at the door ; “ Albert,” she said, “ have you thought on the petition which I mentioned to you this morning ?”—“ My love,” he replied, “ you know my purse is at your disposal ; do as you think proper ; I desired

fired you would before.”—“I should not wish to give more,” she answered, “than you would approve.”—“I don’t doubt,” he returned, “but your own judgment will direct you better than my advice can do; you are always too delicate in using what is mine; I shall soon be obliged to force money upon you, lest from accustoming yourself to petition me as if I restrained your expences you should from habit actually believe I do:—don’t say a word more about it,” The Marchesa obeyed, and I heard her footsteps die away along the gallery. Thought immediately questioned me, “How does this agree with the Marchesa’s account of her husband, and her begging a stranger’s purse?” and I had scarcely time to answer that it was an enigma too hard for my brain to solve, before the Marchese came up to the spot where I was sitting.—“Good morning,” he immediately said, “I am glad you did not stand upon the ceremony of my being at home, but pursued the intention of your visit.”—“You are very kind,” I returned; “I knew you would wish me to act as I have done, and I had not sufficient resolution to debar myself the treat before me because you were not present to me to sit down to it, after you had once given me the invitation.”—“That sounds something like an apology, signor,” he rejoined, “and I do not like to hear a word of that nature from an equal and a friend; I am sure you are a man of that politeness that you would never do any thing in my house which you would not be happy to see me do in your’s; I shall come to England one of these days, and make as free with your Milton.”—“I am astonished,” said I, “that the partiality you constantly do my country and countrymen the honour of professing for them, has never induced you to make a second visit to that kingdom.”—“Why,”

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he replied, "I was once under a promise of paying a visit to an English nobleman—but I prevent your reading, we will talk of this some other time."

—"Upon my word you do not," I answered; "my present amusement is the excellent plates with which these volumes abound; I can look at those, without being inattentive to what you may say: pray gratify me by proceeding: what nobleman was it? I most probably know him."—He is now dead," was the reply. "His death then, I suppose, prevented your visit," I answered.—

"No," returned the Marchese "no, he did not die till two or three years after the time I was to have visited him.—He paused, then continued, "I have unguardedly begun a subject, upon which I did not mean to enter; favour me, Signor, by not questioning me upon it: thus much I will tell you of the circumstance, though I shall forbear to mention his name; the gentleman I refer to, passed some months in this city with his sister for the recovery of her health; I paid to him many civilities, as it is my pleasure to do to strangers, particularly to Englishmen, and on his departure I gave him my promise to visit him in his own country; but before he had left this city a fortnight I learnt that the honour of my family had suffered by his acquaintance with it; of course

determined never to see him again;—but I imbibed no prejudice against his nation, from the act of an individual: I only resolved not to make that individual my host in a country of whose natives, in general, I had formed an exalted opinion."

As the Marchese concluded these words he walked into the library, and the curtain shaded me from his observation;—my book slipped from my hand, and my head fell in reflection upon my arm.

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The Count di Rebini had told me, "that though Paulina was a very fine girl, and her father possessed of a large property, yet she was not a girl whom every man would marry."—What could this assertion mean, but that some stigma had attached itself to her character, either directly, from misconduct of her own, or indirectly, from some wrong action committed by one or both of her parents? The Marchese affirmed, "that the English nobleman had insulted the honour of his family." Probability seemed to declare Paulina too young to have suffered any delusion of the heart, and possibility immediately whispered in my ear, that not the Marchese, but the English nobleman, might be the father of Paulina; that this might be the secret which the Count di Rebini had been on the point of disclosing to me. The Marchesa's conduct towards myself confirmed me in my suspicions: "You bewitching young *Englishmen*!" she had said; mark that, George—" *Englishmen*;" an indirect confession that I was not the only one who had possessed charms for her. From my soul I pitied and honoured the Marchese; I considered him a man whose humane feelings would not permit him to discard from his protection a woman to whom he had once promised it, though she had cast aside the virtues which entitled her to possess it. Yet this was a weakness; but it was a weakness on the side of charity and mercy, and I continued to applaud him for endeavouring to work repentance in a dissolute heart, by tenderness and lenity towards its faults. What a villainous hypocrite is the Marchesa Laura! was the next idea that started up in my brain: great God! how is it possible for a woman of her mercenary and voluptuous disposition to assume that exquisite grace
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of modesty, which gives enchantment to all her open actions! "The Marchese shall come and visit me in England," I inwardly said; "diversity of scene will dispel his sorrows, and I owe to him the invitation in return for his numerous civilities to me." I was on the point of springing up from my seat and going to him, to entreat that he would fix a time for coming to Melford-house, when conscience—yes, Seymour, conscience—kept me immoveable on the sofa. The Marchese had refused to visit his former English friend, because in him he had discovered in him the insulter of his house's honour: was I less culpable than he had been? The Marchese is ignorant, at least I suppose he is ignorant, that my case is a similar one; but yet conscience made me a coward, I durst not ask him to come to England to visit me. Thought had proceeded thus far uninterrupted, when the sound of the Marchese di Marvaldi's steps, returning to the oratory, made me snatch up my book; it opened by accident at the episode of Orlando and Seraphina: the Marchese, in passing me, cast a glance over my shoulder, and said with a smile, "Ah, this is the favourite love-tale of all you young men; indeed I am not too old to like it myself: long as my Laura and I have been united, I feel all the warm affection for her of an Orlando; yet not more than she deserves of me. I think it cannot have escaped your observation, signor, that the Marchesa is one of the most exemplary and tender of wives and mothers." I felt at that moment as if I had been standing at the bar of an inquisition;—I know I smiled, though I felt very serious; and I with difficulty stammered out a short compliment on the superlativeness of the Marchese's connubial felicity. He went on by saying, "Signor Carlo, it is not my wife that I so particularly wish

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wish to give you a high opinion of, by setting forth to you her virtues and amiable conduct, for I perceived that you smiled at my last speech; what I so earnestly desire is—pardon what I am going to say; I know I speak to a man of honour, and that it would be superfluous to ask his secrecy on a point which his own feelings will point out to him is only for the private ear of friendship.” I bowed in return to his compliment; he paused a few moments, then continued---“ Do not you think that, with such an example as that of the Marchesa Laura to regulate her tender and innocent years, my daughter Paulina could make happy the man who should receive her hand?” The prophetic words of the Count di Reбини, that the Marchese wished to see me the husband of his daughter immediately returned with force to my memory. I answered, “ that Paulina, in my opinion, possessed every personal charm, every mental virtue, and every polite accomplishment, that could render a woman valuable to the man who should seek to unite himself with her for life? Pleasure glistened in the eyes of the Marchese as I spoke these words; he caught my hand, and scarcely allowing me to conclude my sentence exclaimed, “ Do you indeed see my daughter Paulina in this point of view?”—“ Certainly,” I answered; “ I never avow esteem which I do not feel.”—“ Do not laugh at a fond father,” said he; “ but I wish you had said love; you know not what happiness it would give to see my Paulina your wife.” The Marchese spoke this as conscious himself that he had spoken no impropriety, yet fearful that the person to whom it was addressed should conceive it such. I endeavoured to reply in a tone of voice which should show that I was sensible of a compliment having been paid to me, yet that I was resolute in not accepting it: I said,

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“The high opinion which you have just given me proof that you entertain of me, merits my warmest thanks, and shall ever be marked on that side of my heart where gratitude is written; but my affections are not my own to bestow, my heart is already given to another.”—“Are you already married?” he asked. “In sentiment,” I replied, “though not by law.”—Paulina knows nothing of what I have now said to you,” he returned; “and I trust she never will.” He paused, and fixed his eyes on mine. “I shall never speak of it,” I replied. “You have a noble and worthy heart, the characteristic of your countrymen,” he said, pressing my hand between his with the strictness of animation arising from contending feelings. I was fit to tear away my hand from his: to suffer him to press it was tacitly avowing myself possessed of the noble and worthy heart on which he had complimented me, and I felt myself all the while a serpent to his peace. He proceeded thus: “Signor, how strangely must you think of me for the offer of my daughter, which I have just made to you; a man of warm feelings is hurried on by the desire of seeing his favourite with accomplished, as is a man in love, by his anxiety to enjoy the favourite object of his passion while it is in view; his eyes are shut to the extravagancies which he uses to obtain it, and disappointment only opens them to reflection on the means he has pursued.” I replied, “I am sure, Marchese, you wish the happiness of your daughter——” “Witness Heaven!” he interrupted me by exclaiming. “The means are then in your power,” I continued; “the amiable Paulina loves the Marquis de Belleterre, and I believe him worthy of her affection.”—“No,” answered the Marchese, “no, that must never be; the Marquis is, I believe, a tolerably good young man as the times go, and I doubt not, as far

far as lies in the power of his heart, would contribute towards the happiness of my daughter, if she were wedded to him; but, though possessed of a title, his estate in France, which is his all, and that by no means extensive, is already so much encumbered, that he can barely subsist as a single man; how then could my daughter be maintained by him with that degree of comfort, I may say elegance, in which she has been brought up? A father does not like to make another family by marrying his daughter into it, when her accomplishments and fortune are such as should claim her an alliance to aggrandize herself; Paulina's husband must not be the Marquis de Belleterre; I know nothing more against the union than what I have mentioned to you, except that I cannot think of him without drawing comparisons which always throw him into the dark shade."—"Endeavour," said I, "to place him in the foreground."—"Two prominent figures in a painting," he replied, trying to force a "smile, if they do not utterly ruin the effect of the piece, are at least incompatible with each other." The Marchese while speaking, had seated himself by me; a silence for some minutes followed his last sentence; he then sighed, rose, took my hand, pressed it in his, looked at me with eyes glistened by a tear, which partook the double nature of pleasure and sorrow, replaced 'Tasso before me' on the table, and then walked slowly out of the library.

What am I to think of all this? I have conjectured so much about what can be the motives which actuate this family, and also whether they are influenced in their—to me unaccountable ---conduct by various motives, or whether they are acting under the same impulse, that my imagination is for the present entirely drained; I shall

shall therefore leave you to think for yourself, and only say, that your opinion upon these extraordinary occurrences will give much satisfaction to,

Your sincere friend,

CHARLES MELFORD.

P. S. Pardon me that self has been so predominant with me, that it is in the postscript of my letter only that I recur to my intended marriage; let the state of my mind plead my excuse, and accept from me the most fervent prayers of true friendship, for the showering down of every happiness upon your wedded life.

LETTER XXI.

Sir Charles Melford to Major Seymour.

DEAR GEORGE,

Venice.

I HAVE left Venice; at least I shall have done so before this letter commences its journey to England.

It is now nearly a week since the conversation I transmitted to you in my last passed between the Marchese and myself. I have been uncomfortable ever since; I have left myself living in the midst of an existing enigma, the solution of which is ever dancing in my brain, and yet never promises accomplishment.

I have been twice this week at the Pallazo di Marvaldi, and have met them every other night at the opera. I cannot help feeling a restraint in the presence of the Marchese which I never knew

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before in his society : his conduct too is that of a man who appears to feel that he has lessened himself in the opinion of another. The Marthea Laura looks still as she always has done, all that is amiable ; and her modest gaiety, to an inaccurate observer, appears the same that it has ever been ; but I am *not* an inaccurate observer of her features, and I perceive a light tint of chagrin, which she is constantly struggling to repel, stealing over her bewitching countenance. Last night, when the attention of almost every one in the theatre was fixed upon the principal character in a new ballet, I saw, while I pretended not to perceive it, that though her face was turned towards the stage, ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~orbs of~~ her eyes were obliquely glancing towards the spot where I stood. When the plaudits began at the conclusion of the dance, she seemed to wake from her reverie, and, as they ceased, I heard a gentle sigh steal from her bosom. Did she sigh because I had that morning informed her that I should leave Venice to-day ? or did she fear that I might change my inclination, and marry Paulina ? — impossible ! She could not suppose me so base, though, lured by her wiles, I had sunk with her into the sin of rendering an innocent husband despicable ! — Oh that vow, why did I bind myself by it ! — I could yet wish before I leave this place — Margareta ! Margareta ! pardon me that I have written the name upon this paper, but I felt myself relaxing into folly, and placed that name in the sentence I was writing as a check upon my feelings. — I know I am talking foolishly and incoherently ; — I do not like the moment of leaving Venice, though I have resolved that I will leave it. — Of how strange, of how unaccountable occurrences to me, has this place been the scene ! and how often have I repeated this sentence to you !

I go

relaxing

I go to bid adieu to the Marvaldi family, and then farewell to Venice for ever.

Noon.

It is done ; I have seen the Marchesa for the last time ; she was alone in the breakfast apartment, when I was shown into it. I announced the occasion of my visit, by saying I was come on the most unpleasant errand which had ever brought me into the Pallazo di Marvaldi. She made me some general compliment in return. She was at work by a table ; I took a chair, drew it to the table, and placed myself immediately opposite to her : I sat some moments in silence, with my eyes neither directly fixed upon her, nor yet sufficiently averted to be looking from her ; I held them in such a direction, that had she raised her's, their rays must inevitably have met.—Her's remained still fixed upon her work.—I suffered a half-smothered sigh to escape me.—Have patience with me, George, consider it was the last time that I was ever to see her, and consider also how intimately we knew each other, and yet how distantly I was permitted to address her, tho' it was for the last time I was ever to see her. I wished to take a tenderer farewell than that to which my oath bound me ; and for this desire you cannot blame me : every man who is not very base indeed, must have some esteem for a woman who has yielded so much to him. — My sigh did not waft itself to the heart of the Marchesa Laura, at least neither her countenance nor attitude underwent the slightest change.—I sat a few moments longer in silence ; I then cast my eyes round the apartment to be assured there was no one in it but ourselves, and almost determined to speak on the forbidden subject.—My lips moved twice in the form which would have produced '*Laura*,' if I had felt sufficient courage to have

given sound to their motion ; at the instant I had resolved to speak it, she threw aside her work, and pushing her chair back from the table, said, " Signor, why so melancholy ? ——— " I leave Venice to-day," was all I could reply. " And in a contour of face," she returned, " which is a most eloquent compliment to the society it contains."—" Indeed," I said, " it is not a compliment, for I never left any place with more sincere regret."—" You are of a country and an education," she answered, " which must render every society equally desirous of making itself pleasant to you ; it is not possible that in any place to which you may happen to travel, if in that place there be any individuals who are civilised, you can live unnoticed."—" But every individual," replied I, " who may possess the desire of becoming intimate with a stranger, may not possess the exquisite art of rendering that intimacy interesting to his feelings."—I spoke this sentence with a soft but due emphasis, and, while speaking it, I endeavoured to communicate to my eye the feelings of my heart. The Marchesa smiled while I was speaking, and when I stopped she said, " I wish my husband and Paulina had been present to have received their share of this very elegant compliment ; I'll endeavour not to let it lose of any of its force by my repetition." George, had I not heard her pronounce these words, and beheld her countenance while she delivered them, I could not have believed it possible for a woman who had once given indulgence to her passions as the Marchesa Lauru had done, to have addressed the very man with whom she had gone astray in the voice of innocent sweetness, accompanied by the look of chilling modesty, with which she spoke these words to me. I have often blushed, I know not why, in the society of a *known* modest woman ; but had any
one

one ever told me, that it were possible for the *affected* modesty of a woman of whose levity I have had proof to have made me feel awkward for a single moment, I believe I should have challenged him as an insulter of my manhood ; however, so it was ; the assumed modesty of this woman actually cowed me, and before I could recover myself to speak to her again, the Marchese and his daughter came into the room *together*. The moment I saw them enter, I could not forbear asking myself, whether it had been by accident or design that the Marchesa had received me alone ?—if by design, she had made bad use of the time which I had passed alone with her ; perhaps I ought to have made her some present !—if she had received me alone by accident, how well had she adhered to the conduct to which she had told me she should ever act up when necessary in my presence. Doubtless it *was* necessary then that she should be upon her guard, only I was not acquainted why it was necessary ; surely, had this not been the case, as we were never to see each other again—but I will not conjecture any farther about what can now never be elucidated ; suffice it to say, that I kissed a hand of her and Paulina at parting, and shook both those of the Marchese ; he gave mine the pressure of warm friendship ; my heart was too honest to return it, but it offered up a fervent prayer for his happiness, as I ran down the steps of his mansion.

My last enigmatical task is performed, and I feel happier than I have done for some time. The Marquis de Belleterre is waiting to see me depart ; he is an excellent young man, and I wish Paulina were his ; he is fighting over her name, and I have not the courage to tell him that I fear the sighs he now breathes are not the heaviest he will

will ever draw on pronouncing that word. Adieu! I intend journeying towards Rome. I hope you will allow me a little merit (I give *myself* a great deal of trouble), for having taken my last walks in the streets of Venice. Do not laugh at me; make some allowance for the variety of dispositions; recollect that you have ever, from a boy, been the uniform and steady George Seymour; I the volatile, though honest,

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER XXII.

Sir Charles Melford to Major Seymour.

DEAR GEORGE,

Post-house at M——.

I AM not more than seven leagues removed from Venice, nor is it above as many hours since I concluded a long epistle to you; and yet I no sooner leave my carriage to change horses than I call for pen, ink, and paper, to address you again.—Some new wonder, you doubtless imagine, occasions this hasty writing: if I had not almost ceased to call any occurrence by that name, I should say this were one.—Just as I was stepping into my carriage at the door of the hotel in St. Mark's-square, a male figure masked came up to me, and put into my hand a note, which I here transcribe: "Oh that I knew a name sufficiently tender by which to bid farewell to my dear Signor Carlo!—oh what a torturing restraint have my feelings undergone when I have so repeatedly been in your society, and yet have only dared to acknowledge the approbation with which my

heart

heart beheld you through the cold medium of politeness!—then, too, to be constrained at parting, though alone with you, to bid you adieu only in the chilling and common-place terms of civility!—oh! it was a greater violence to my feelings than my soul is capable of bearing up under, without the alleviation of telling you, by the means of this paper, that there is a heart in Venice, from which your image will never be effaced till the cold hand of death stops the vibration of those pulses which nourish your idea. Signor, I have ever appeared to you a mystery, in all but love; in that my heart has challenged your's with frankness: shame would overpower me while I make this confession under my handwriting, had I not two supporters amidst all my difficulties, my agonies, and my disappointments, on which I do and ever will rely for consolation; the one is your honour, the other a secret impulse; an impulse which I dare not, cannot confess, but under which I must act; which, if explained to you, would free me from that gross violation of honour under which my character must appear to you to lie, if ever you have considered that character, if it may be called one, impartially. Oh that I durst show myself to you as I am, as I would wish to be!—but, if I did, inevitable perdition must be the consequence: let me drive the idea from my head, and let me proceed to humble myself still more before you than I have already done—I cannot write what I would say—O holy virgin! why was I born to feel the conflicts that rend my heart!—Pity me, I must speak; I once asked your purse—understand me—do not oblige me to say more.—My heart would break if I did not resolve that it should live to pray for Carlo. How much do I envy this paper! your eyes are fixed on it—I shall meet them

them no more !—Adieu ; may you be far, far
happier than
LAURA."

Extraordinary woman !—how can she be actuated ! what can be the impulse under which she acts ?—I hesitated a moment what to do ; then returned into a room of the hotel, took a sheet of paper, and having written in its centre, " May these contribute to your happiness," I sealed it up in fifty zechins, called for the mask, and asked him if he knew to whom to carry it ? He bowed, in signal that he did ; I accordingly gave it into his hand without a direction, leaped into my carriage, and fell into a reverie, from which I scarcely awoke till I arrived at this spot.

I am more surprised than ever in my conjectures about this family, particularly the Marchesa : if her designs upon me had solely been gain, surely she would not have been contented with the two trifling sums she has obtained from me ; and at how dear a rate, if I was inclined to boast of a lady's partiality, has she obtained them !—She doubtless labours under some secret sorrow : I have ever felt myself the friend of mankind, and wish from my heart I could alleviate, if but in part, the pangs of so exquisitely interesting a woman. Oh, Seymour, conceive what a woman she must be, who can one moment, by her modesty, freeze the pulse of the same heart, which she can, in another moment, render unable to refuse accompanying her's through the most unbounded ranges of pleasure.

At the conclusion of my last sentence I mean to have sealed up my letter ; but it was fated not to set off without a little more intelligence. My servant has just been in my room, asking me whether I knew the mask who put the note into my hand

hand as I was leaving Venice? This question I immediately concluded to be the preface to some information he was going to give me, and my answer was an enquiry whether the mask was known to him? He replied, that in stooping down to lift one of my trunks into the carriage, he had caught a glimpse of the face which the mask had been meant to conceal, and had discovered it to be that of old Bernardo, the major-domo of the Marchese di Marvaldi. On the evening that I met the Marchesa alone in the cassino she told me that she had one friend in the Pallazo di Marvaldi; this friend I had before conjectured to be the major-domo, from the remark he had made to me when I was examining the portrait of the Marchesa over the chimney in the music-room; what my servant has just told me confirms my suspicion.

For Heaven's sake write to me soon; consider I have no confidant near me, and want something very much to communicate with in addition to my own thoughts.

The Pope is the father of mysteries; I wonder whether he would be able to explain the one in which I am involved: I shall consider about calling upon him when I arrive at Rome, to ask his assistance. *Good!*

Farewell, and believe me your sincere friend,
CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER XXIII.

Major Seymour to Charles Melford.

Kirton.

WELL, my dear Charles, the summit of my earthly wishes is accomplished; the lovely Emma Hughford has consented to become the wife of your friend, and the nuptials are to be solemnised in the course of six weeks: but Mrs. Hughford as particular as warm in her affection to her daughter, does not permit us to have any other residence than her house; and though I have not much opinion of the great happiness which can result to either party from parents and children inhabiting the same dwelling, yet I think Mrs. Hughford will afford an exception to my general opinion. She is amiable, well informed, and liberal in her judgments; equally adapted and equally willing to be the friend and companion of youth; she possesses those engaging manners from which advice comes apologised for, by the very evident excellence of the disposition which delivers it, and from whose lips censure issues in so gentle terms, that it carries conviction of her just discernment to the heart of those to whom it is addressed. Mrs. Hughford is, in the exact acceptation of the phrase, an old English gentlewoman. Her manners possess ease without flippancy; her deportment and dress favour of the old court, but they give her rather an interesting than a risible peculiarity. Her mansion, like herself, is ancient and venerable, and bears the marks of much beauty, insisting upon notice amidst the gradual decay of the whole.— Her servants are old, and carry in their countenances

nances a demand upon those privileges which fidelity has given them : nay, the old mastiff who guards the entrance appears by a growl, which he accompanies by a wag of his tail, to be enforcing his claim upon your respect, on the strength of a like prerogative. My Emma alone is in the glow of present perfection ; and the willing attention which she pays to the unities of the parent scene around her renders her to my partial eyes, the goddess of animation to the spot on which she smiles. The entire village of Kirton is Mrs. Hughford's, and she is the mother of those who breathe in it : babes lisp her name, and their ancestors proudly tell you, that the Man of Ross has an equal in a woman !—Oh, how wrong, how ignorant are those who consider the inferior classes of society as animals devoid of the feelings which endear man to man, and as destitute of the virtues ;—when they are so, depend upon it, Charles, it is the superior who has cruelly hardened their hearts into depravity. Beneficence exercised towards the poor never fails to beget their gratitude ; their minds are not born humble with their conditions ; their hearts are naturally as soft to the impressions of virtue as those of their superiors. How excessively then does the superior err, when he drives them to the necessity of hardening their minds to feed their hunger, and when he, by his own example, freezes into want of feeling their before gentle hearts. Mrs. Hughford's plantations are not cut down in the winter, nor her woodstacks robbed ; for she suffers no peasant to want a blazing faggot on his hearth, whilst she herself enjoys the glowing coals. Mrs. Hughford has game in plenty ; for she tempts no poor peasant to turn poacher ; by suffering his family to want those necessities of which she is enjoying a superfluity

superfluity. Mrs. Hughford fears no thieves by night; for, when merit applies for charity, she never shuts her ear against its prayer, nor closes her hand against the impulse of her heart. Oh, Charles, I am, for the first time of my life, in raptures!—What a state of enviable happiness shall I enjoy, in endeavouring to act so as to be thought worthy of succeeding Mrs. Hughford, jointly with my Emma, in her hold upon the hearts of these poor villagers. How contemptible a tyrant, or how ignorant a reasoner must that man be, who despises the good opinion of the poor man! a good opinion from the mouth of the poor man, is the most meritorious praise the rich man can be titled with; to have done an action which begets us the gratitude of him upon whom it is performed, when he is one from whom no return can be expected, is the noblest test of the goodness of his heart by whom it was conferred.

Come, Charles, come to England; make Margaretta the mistress of your hand as she is already of your heart. Leave the delusions of Italy, which can only titillate your passions, without touching your mind, and return to the stable enjoyments which your union with the woman to whom you are so wisely attached can alone ensure you; let us both commence the married state at as near a period to each other as we are able; let us make it our pleasure to emulate each other's happiness, while we make it our boast that there is no preponderancy in the felicity of either, to be envied by the other. I do not say that I *hope* you have left Venice, because I trust you have done so long ago. I forbear comments on your last letters; the subjects that they treat of are such, pardon me, as deserve only to be known that they may be forgotten; give me a subject worthy to be engraven on my memory;

tell

tell me that you are on the point of returning to England, and calling Margareta wife; this intelligence would give infinite satisfaction to him who is ever your sincere friend.

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

LETTER XXIV.

Sir Charles Melford, to Major Seymour.

DEAR GEORGE,

Post-house at Q—.

HAVING now left Venice a fortnight, my curiosity relative to the strange occurrences which passed while I was resident in that place become enfeebled, and I begin now again to take pleasure in those matters of research which brought me hither; and where, think you, I am now moralizing and writing to you?—in a miserable hovel, dignified by the name of inn, and in which I see no apartment set aside for the use of strangers, except the chamber in which I am now sitting, and which contains two very uninviting beds, designed to be occupied by myself and my servant. If my supper-fare answers the appearance of my apartment, it will not be very tempting; and my lamp is so dim that I lay down my pen at the end of every line I write, to trim it; and to very little purpose do I exert my endeavours. Well, there is a happiness in not having a disposition which leads us to imbibe fastidious ideas in our youth; they are the continual bane to the happiness through life

life of those who have inhaled them. How many a man with the three letters prefixed to his christian name, which precede mine, would imagine, for instance, that the burning of oil affected his olfactory nerves, and conceive himself ill for a month afterwards; nor indeed are these delicate habits now-a-days confined entirely to those who have titles as their apologies, they take a far wider limit, and bind themselves to those whose education has been neglected, or, what is worse, the purposes of it perverted by affectation. By education having been neglected, I do not mean to instance a mind which has not been instructed in the various languages, arts, sciences, and accomplishments; I mean that heart which has not been taught alone the theory, but the practice, of moral duties, social and particular; which has not learnt that the man of letters is not a wise man, unless he suffers common sense and received opinion to be the rule of his actions; and who is not convinced, that to be universally contented with the accidents of life, is a much happier trait in his character than is the affectation of feelings too refined to bear with ease the casualties of an imperfect state. Man is made after the image of God; and if that image, when called a ploughman, be content and feel happy to use the favours with which nature has endowed it, unadulterated by affectation, it is a truer resemblance of the original from which it is copied, than that image with any other name which twists its abilities into perverted channels.

A rap at my door—"Come in"—my hostess enters, and with a smile and a courtsey tells me, 'she has a favour to beg of me, which she is sure I will not refuse her.' French and Italian women, I have remarked, always compliment a man

of

of whom they are going to make a request, upon the benignity of his features.—“What is your demand?” said I. “A carriage,” she replied, “with only one gentleman in it, has just stopped at my door; the horses are too much fatigued to proceed on their journey to-night; I have no room in my house but this, and my kitchen below, and should esteem it as a great favour done to me, if you would permit the gentleman to share your room and supper with you, and occupy one of the two beds which this apartment affords, I’ll give your servant half a bed with my son in the hay-loft.”—“If it had been a lady instead of a gentleman,” said I smiling in my hostess’s face—“You are a gentleman yourself, signor,” she answered, “and it might have been your fate to have arrived last yourself.” She spoke these words with an archness that pleased me; and I desired her, as I had from the first moment of my learning what was her request intended to do, to show the gentleman up stairs.

I hear my hostess and the stranger approaching;—ought I to lay down my pen to receive him or not?—no, certainly not; he comes to occupy the half-room which my hostess lets to him, and not to visit me; if there had been another apartment in the house, I should not have seen his face.—“First come, first served,” is an old proverb; I sometimes feel a respect for those old good sayings, and a desire to enforce the truth; I have left my co-lodger the bed nearest to the door.—They are coming up stairs;—my hostess enquires if he has no servant with him or upon the road?—a faint voice answers, “No.” She bids him beware he does not stumble, for the stairs were very bad—note this miracle, George—a hostess can speak truth.

They

They enter—a long roquelaure conceals the figure of the stranger, I can only perceive that he is low of stature :—he takes no notice of me, so I continue writing.—The hostess has assisted him in taking off his roquelaure ;—his proportions are thin and effeminate ; he speaks so low, and in answers of monosyllables to the questions of the hostess, that I cannot discover whether his voice resembles his person in its delicacy ; the duskiness of the room and the large hat which the stranger wears, prevent me from seeing his face ;—he has placed himself in a chair ; my hostess puts a table before him to rest the lamp upon, which is allotted to him ;—with a glance at each of us, as much as to say, “ How much more comfortable you might be, if you would become acquainted, gentlemen,” she now leaves the room.

How awkwardly Englishmen feel in the presence of utter strangers when compared with any other nation !—I could like to break the silence, yet cannot resolve what to say ;—the youth, for such he appears, sighs—he rises and approaches a few steps towards the spot where I am sitting.—Great God ! he calls me ‘ Carlo,’ in a tone of voice which thrills my heart.—Oh, heavens ! it is !—it is the Marchesa Laura in disguise !

I can write no more now.

Three in the morning.

OH, Seymour, I know not how to address you, what to tell you, or what to conceal from you ;---conceal is an ugly term, when used to a friend, yet if I speak out, I know you will think me censurable---culpable ; but indeed I am not ; events cannot always be described exactly as they happened, however desirous may be the inclination of him who writes them, to give them with accuracy. It was the Marchesa Laura in the habit of a youth ; don’t blame her conduct,
she

she has some secret cause for misery, which preys upon her heart, to atone for her frailties. How was I startled by seeing her before me, on the spot where she then stood!—I was however on my guard; I rose from my seat, and bowed respectfully to her in silence. She extended her hand towards me, and as I took it in mine, she said “We are safe, my dear Carlo, we have nothing to fear at the present moment, we may speak without restraint?” Her voice appeared so rough to what I had ever before heard it, that it startled me, and almost undecided whether it was she or not; I still continued silent.---“Don’t you know me, Carlo?” she asked in a softened voice, while a tender smile spread itself over her features. “That smile,” I replied, “confirms that you are the Marchesa Laura.”---“I feared,” said she, “that you were sorry to see me here; I trembled to behold your uncertainty; I mistook it for your hesitation whether or not to acknowledge one fallen like myself.”---“Fallen!” I exclaimed. “Sit down,” she returned, “I cannot stand, I am weak, faint, and harassed beyond the strength of my poor heart.” We sat down, and she continued by saying, “Oh, God, that I should meet you here! and yet if you cast me from you, I am the most miserable outcast on this wretched earth.” She placed one hand before her eyes, and her bosom rose and fell in quick snatches produced by mental agony. “For God’s sake,” said I, moved to compassion by her sorrows, “what has befallen you?---why do I see you here and in this disguise?---why are the first sounds with which you accost me those of despondency and affliction?” Her tears increased, but she spoke not. “Tell me, I entreat you tell me, what afflicts you,” I said pressing her hand in mine: “have confidence in me, and lay open
open

open your heart to me."—"Never," she replied with emphasis, "never; it must not, cannot be." she paused a few moments then went on: "I cannot at least not for the present; a time may come yet, that cannot be, for we shall never meet again, never more see each other after this night; had I known that this house contained you, Signor Carlo, I had not entered it.—Oh, why do I meet you again, where we are free from the observation of all eyes but our own!—Oh that it had not happened! and yet my foolish my traitorous heart felt joy at first beholding you." There was such a contradiction in this declaration of her sorrow at our having met, and her salutation of pleasure on first beholding me, that I felt unable to answer her. While I was reflecting in what words to address her, she rose hastily from her seat, threw her arms about my neck, kissed my cheek with fervor, and then darting from me towards the door, exclaimed, "Farewel, for ever!" I ran to her, and took her hand to draw her back. "Why do you fly me thus?" I cried. "Because I know your heart," she replied. "How! what know you of it?" I asked. "That it is a heart," she answered, "warm in sympathy towards the wretched, and that I have already trespassed too much on its feelings; all the return I can make to you is to fly to some spot where the ability will not be left me of making farther encroachments on its goodness: farewel, endeavour to forget me: if you should remember me, all I beg of you is not to hate my ill-fated memory for intruding unbidden upon your happy moments."—"You shall not go without giving me some explanation of your situation and cause of misery," I cried. "I would sooner die, than give it to you," she replied: "oh, Carlo, it is the only thing I could refuse you." She paused a few moments

moments, and our eyes met in tender, though silent, eloquence. With a heart-drawn sigh she then said, "For the holy Jesus' sake, I entreat you to let me go."—"Whither," I asked, "whither would you go? and why desire to fly me?"—"Why, I have already told you," she replied; "whither, is a question I cannot so readily answer."—"Where is the Marchese?" I asked. "In Venice," she returned. "And you here alone?" said I. "I have left the Marchese for ever," she returned. "Left him!" I exclaimed. "I am separated for ever from him and from my daughter," she answered in a tone of dignified firmness mixed with a sorrow which she appeared to wish to conceal. "I told you, Signor Carlo, that the Marchese di Marvaldi never loved me, but oh, signor, I could not tell you how I loved, how I adored him; how little should I have thought it, to have sacrificed honour, fame, life, to the happiness of that ungrateful man; and oh, how has he requited me! Signor Carlo, I have not folded my child to my bosom since the first day of her entrance into this world; see how the mother's pangs have been recompensed to me. Judge how my heart has ———" she started; "but I am betraying myself, and invoking on my own wretched head a misery greater even than that which I now suffer, and which my death alone can end."—"But the Marchese has settled a provision upon you for life?" I said. "He has settled upon me," she replied, "that only of which he could not deprive me;—the wide globe to seek a hard maintenance upon."—"And do you seek no redress from the laws of your country?" I said. "They would grant me none," she answered. "What have you done to forfeit their protection?" I asked. "Nothing," was her answer.

swer. "Of what, then, would the Marchese accuse you?" was my next question. "Nothing," she replied; "he would defend me in a court of justice."—"And yet drives you from his own house?" I returned. "He would rather see me dead than living under the roof of his mansion," she answered. Again she struggled to free herself from my hand, and gain the door. I felt an interest in the situation of a woman cast thus friendless, and thus mysteriously upon the world, which would not permit me to suffer her to leave me till I had used more persuasions for endeavouring to prevail with her to tell me how I might alleviate her condition. I besought her if she had resolved that we should never meet after this night, at least to grant me a few hours' conversation while we were together. To this she with difficulty consented, and I had just led her back to her seat when the entrance of the busy hostess with our supper obliged us to remain silent, or to speak only on forced subjects, till the conclusion of our meal gave her no longer a plea for remaining in our apartment.

On our being at length left alone, I thus addressed her; on your first finding me in this apartment, you said that we were free to speak without restraint; you doubtless meant on any subject?" She reddened extremely, and said in a quick and tremulous voice, "On any subject but *one*, remember your oath."—"Does it bind me here?" I asked. She raised her hands in an attitude of entreaty, and fixing upon me her piercing eyes full of supplication, said in a low accent, "For the love of God, do not swerve from what you have sworn." I was compelled not to speak on the subject upon which alone I wished to converse, thus continued silent for some minutes.

The Marchesa rested her head upon the palm of

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of her hand, and continued also without speaking. I looked toward her, but her eyes were hid by her hand. I sighed to attract her attention, as I was undecided, if I spoke, what to say. She echoed my sigh, and raised herself from the posture of reflection in which she had been sitting; she then said, "You requested me, Signor Carlo, to grant you a few hours' conversation, I am prepared to hear you."—What *can* I say to you?" I asked, rising in agitation from my seat. She understood my question, she perceived that I was glancing at the interdicted subject, and answered; "Signor, was not I right in pressing you to suffer me to be gone from hence some time ago?"—"Your reason for stopping at this house, I understood, before I saw you, was your inability to travel farther to-night; how then," I returned, "can I, now I do know who the traveller is, permit her to undergo any inconvenience, to which she is even desirous of submitting herself?" She smiled with a half sigh, but did not speak, I took two or three turns of the room in silence, hoping she would give me a hint for my conversation; for since the admonition which she had given me in an under voice, I began to imagine absurdities without any fixed ideas; and to fear, without knowing of what I was alarmed. A few moments of cool reflection, however, rid my mind of these unpleasant sensations, but not of wonder; I began to be confirmed that whatever cause for mystery there was about the Marchesa, if there really were cause for any, must lie in herself, as she had come alone to the inn; and was certainly not known by any one in it, as she passed upon its inhabitants for a male. Those enigmas which appear the most complex are often the most simple when solved, and cautions which seem very unnecessary to those unacquainted

quainted with the reasons why they are taken, frequently prove most judicious when explained: this conclusion I next drew, and it contented me to continue for the present passive in the affairs of the Marchesa. I returned to her, took her hand, and held it for some moments between the palms of mine; "I then said, you have travelled too far to-day, you are very much fatigued."—"I am indeed weary," she answered: "my spirits, and my strength are alike exhausted."—"Retire to bed," I returned. "I shall," she replied; "I want the refreshment of sleep: she drew her hand out of mine, rose, went to the door, opened it, and called for the hostess. "What do you want?" said I; "why did you not send me for whatever you may require?"—"I could not commission you," she answered: "I must see the hostess myself: she is coming; do me the favour to remain at the other end of the room till I have spoken to her." I obeyed by placing myself before the window, though the darkness was so thick it was impossible for me to discern objects through it. The hostess and the Marchesa whispered together some moments; the hostess then went down the first stair and stopped. The Marchesa turned towards me, and said in the same tone of affected roughness in which she had before spoken when the hostess was present, "Signor, pray go to bed, I shall be gone some time." She then followed the hostess down the stairs, and when she arrived where her head only was visible to me, as I stood in the chamber, she gave me a smile, which played round my heart like a liquid fire, and which my heated senses told me I could not fail to interpret right.

It appeared strange to me that she should thus quit the apartment, and still more unaccountable that there should be any matter which in her present

present character of a male, she could want to confide to the hostess, and at the same time to have me remain unacquainted with : however, I had reflected so much to no purpose on the character of the Marchesa, that I resolved to admit no more thoughts at the present time, except the anticipation of her return for the night.

For the first few minutes after she was gone I continued blessing the accident which had caused us to meet in this strange manner.—Here, George, I know you will exclaim violently against my conduct ; perhaps throw down my letter, and swear you will never read another line of my penning ; but have patience, and hear my defence. Your anger would, I grant, be justifiable, if, with my purer affections privately pledged to Margareta, I had been sufficiently base to have sought this interview with the Marchesa di Marvaldi : but indeed you are unjust to me if you accuse me of any thing harsher than an incorrectness in my morals, from not having flown from the peculiar situation in which chance had placed me.

“Go to bed,” she had said : I supposed that there was probably some concealed meaning in these words, and it was my part to obey them ; at all events, I considered that it would be the best safeguard against suspicion of the truth relating to us, If I pretended to be fast asleep when the hostess should light her back to the chamber : I accordingly undressed myself, and got into the bed nearest the door :—the case was altered since my first resolution. I had no occasion to make use of any efforts to keep myself awake : it would have required some art, I confess, for me to have lulled myself to sleep. The Marchesa seemed to me a very long while in returning ; but I attributed at first the apparent length of time to my impatience for her coming. Half an hour

hour, by the shortest calculation I could persuade myself to make, she had been gone : I got up and looked at my watch ; I found that I had been in bed five minutes above that time. I listened at my chamber door. I heard voices below in conversation, but could not discover whether hers was of the number. I durst not open the door, and I began to consider that it was equally unguarded to keep my lamp burning : I put it out, and again got into bed. After about ten minutes more, I heard a foot begin to ascend the stairs, and immediately after the hostess, complimenting herself on the pains she always bestowed on the airing of her beds. I slid down into my bed, and began to affect the hard breathing of sleep. The door opened, my hostess bade good-night to her guest, and departed. The chamber door, was immediately shut and bolted. Neither the feet nor tongue of the hostess were now any longer audible, and I thought it time to throw off the shadow of sleep : while I was raising my head from the pillow, footsteps were approaching the side of my bed ; I pulled back the curtain, and met the face of my own servant. " What do you want ? what brings you here ?" said I hastily, in a tone of voice between anger and disappointment. " I am come to bed, sir," he returned. " You are not to sleep here," I replied : " I know the bed in this room was intended for you at first ; but the hostess has since given it to the gentleman who arrived here some time after us."—" You forget, sir, that he altered his intention, and that he is gone again," rejoined my servant. " Gone !" I could only repeat as I started up in the bed ; " gone ?" I believe John thought me as great an enigma as I did the Marchesa ; he answered, " Yes, sir," in a tone of voice from which it might be gathered that he concluded his sentence

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mentally with, "What can that signify to you?" "Gone!" I again vociferated; "I'll follow *her* instantly by all that——" As I spoke I sprang from the bed, and was running towards the door; John ran faster than I did, and placed his back against it: "For Heaven's sake," he cried, "what is the matter with you, sir! are you not well?" I paused a moment in silence; I saw the folly of my conduct: "Better in health, John," I returned than in reason." John's countenance answered as intelligibly as his tongue could have spoken it, that it was the very thing he feared. I walked slowly back to the bed; still he stood with his back against the door. "Come away from the door," said I; "I shall not attempt to leave the room."—"I hope not, sir," he replied in a doubtful tone. He is a faithful servant, who has lived with me for these dozen years past; he is, I am persuaded, attached to me and my interests, and I did not like to render him uneasy about me, by suffering any incoherent start of mine, like the one he had just witnessed, to remain unexplained; I therefore said, "I was a great fool just now, John; you might well think me mad when I talked of pursuing the gentleman, and called him *her*, into the bargain; but it was indeed a female whom I had seen before in Venice, and whom I did not expect would have left me before the morning." John appeared satisfied with my explanation. "How did you know she was gone?" I next asked. "The hostess, sir," he answered, "told me about half an hour ago, that the gentleman who was to have occupied the second bed in my master's room had persuaded his postillion to take him another stage to-night, and that I might now use the bed." John went to bed, and immediately to sleep; I could not sleep, even after having courted the drowsy god for

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above two hours so I rose to write this, now I have imparted to you what has happened to me, I think less seriously of it. Twilight is beginning to appear, I'll lie down and try again to take a few hours sleep, before I continue my journey.

Nine o'clock.

I HAVE had so many waking and sleeping dreams, that, on reflecting upon them, I hardly know how to divide them. I asked my hostess, as soon as I saw her this morning, "what was the reason that the signor had left the house at so late an hour last night?"—"He gave no reason," she replied; "but I have set him down in my mind for "a poor youth that is crossed in love."—"Which way did he travel?" I next enquired. "I do not know," she answered; "my son went with him to the stable, and I did not hear him say which way the carriage took: I could have asked him, but he has been gone out to work these two hours."

I wonder whether the Marchesa is gone to Rome; but I will endeavour not to think about her at all. It is an age since I have heard from you; I expect to find an immense packet at Rome; Farewel, George, and believe me your sincere friend,

CHARLES MELFORD.

P. S. On reviewing what I have penned, I find that I have written almost a volume, instead of a letter; follow the example I set to you, and do not send me a letter half filled.

LET.

LETTER XXV.

Major Seymour to Sir Charles Melford.

MY DEAR CHARLES,

Kirton.

THOUGH I have not heard from you in the course of the last fortnight, yet I doubt not but there is a letter from you on its journey to me, so that I do not take pique, but write at my accustomed time.

In my last I described to you the happiness that reigns in the village where the parent of my Emma is the mother of all who dwell in it. I had already learned to prize the scene in which I lived ; I have now been taught to adore the means which keep it in unison and felicity. Nothing strikes the human breast so forcibly with the conviction of any truth, as its contrast being laid open before the eyes. This has within the few last days been my case ; I have witnessed how unprincipled a tyrant the man can be, who has a little accidental authority given him over his fellow-creatures. Oh, Charles, how peculiarly is it the business of those who have the power, to employ themselves in distributing happiness to those who have not the means of procuring it for themselves. Call not him the man of virtue who expends his thousands in decorating with sumptuous furniture a church, and then deems himself a man of God, because he rolls to it in his coach and four ; nor

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him who gives a scanty pittance to the labourers on his estate upon which they must starve, for they cannot live, and then imprisons them if they dare, in order to appease hunger, take from the common bed of nature a meagre mouthful, called a hare, or a partridge, which he asserts to be the property of a few, and which the great Designer of *all* made for the use of *all*;—no; he is the man of virtue who enables the poor to live in comfort without discouraging them from industry; who hears their little tales of grief and joy, and, when he does hear them, enters into their feelings. Sympathy is as dear to the heart of nature as to the heart of education; it is the equal right of both, and it is a feeling for which, if the great lend it to the little, the little will never fail to join their interest in the support of him who has given it to them, if ever accident should render him in need of being upheld by them.

Now, to what I was going to relate to you:—Emma and I were out the other evening on horseback; we strayed beyond the bounds of Mrs. Hughford's manor, into an adjoining village. As we were passing a clump of trees which overhangs the border of a small lake, the voice of a songstress caught our ears: we stopped our horses to listen to her: her tones were exquisitely fine and melancholy; the words she was singing we could not distinguish, nor could we see her: at the desire of Emma we approached nearer to the trees: at the foot of one of them knelt a female form; her face was pale, but beautiful; her hair hung dishevelled down her back, her eyes were turned upwards and fixed, her hands were clasped and extended towards Heaven, her dress was a plain russet gown, and a white handkerchief which hung loosely round her neck. By her side stood an old

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man, clad in all the sorrow of poverty and age, supporting himself upon a stick, upon the top of which his palsied hands were crossed. Neither of them appeared to notice our approach, and the female continued singing:—

“ Oh had I gone with my true love,
Too happy had I been!
Oh let me see him once again,
Let me be Henry's queen!

Cruel war! oh spare my true love,
Shield him in the battle's heat:
Alas! if he should fall in warfare,
Susan's heart would cease to beat.”

She stopped singing with a sigh that was drawn from the bottom of her heart, but still continued in the attitude in which we had first seen her. Emma entreated that I would speak to her. We both dismounted, gave our horses to the servant, and went up to the melancholy pair. “ Who is Henry, pretty maid?” said I. “ If you want to kill him too,” answered she, “ you cannot get at him; for I have hid him quite low and deep under the green turf.” As she spoke she turned her eyes upon us, and they bore in them a conviction that her words were those of insanity. “ Oh, pretty lady,” she continued, turning to Emma, “ do not fall in love with a soldier, for the cruel men who make poor soldiers fight will kill your Henry too, and break your heart, as they have mine.”—“ Poor Susan is out of her wits, my lady,” said the old man, without raising his head. “ Is she your daughter?” I asked. “ Yes, poor child, she is mine, my lady,” he replied: “ you must excuse me if I call you by wrong names, for I have been blind this many a year.”

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What think you, Charles, of this picture of human misery?—old, decrepid, poor, blind, and the father of a distracted child! My blood ran cold; the tears stole down Emma's cheeks; the maniac observed them: "Oh, I wish I could weep like you," she said; "but my heart is so hot, that it drinks up all my tears."—"She does nothing but wander abroad all day, and talk in this sad manner," rejoined the old man. "Who takes care of her?" I asked. "I do," replied the father. "How can you guide yourself?" I said; "she is incapable of assisting you."—"I know every inch of ground in this part of the country as well as if I could see it," he returned.

Susan rose hastily, beckoned to Emma, and said, "Come here, lady, make haste, and I'll show you where I buried him; but do not tell the cruel men where I have hid him."—"You may trust yourself with her," said the old man, if you have any curiosity to see the grave she has raised to his memory." Emma followed her; I walked by the side of the old man. "The Henry she speaks of," said I, "was doubtless her lover."—"Her husband," answered the father. "Was he killed in battle?"—"No, sir, not just in battle, as I may say: it is a very sad story, sir. A few paces brought us to a lump of turf, cut in the shape of a grave, stuck round with boughs of trees, and strewed with flowers. When we came up to the spot, Susan was holding Emma with one hand, and pointing with the forefinger of her other hand to the grave: "Stand you still," she then said, and I will tell him that he is safe; that there is nobody here to hurt him." She then flew to the grave, threw herself upon it, and pressed her bosom to the turf, while a momentary pleasure glistered in her eye, and her lips moved as if she were speaking. "Her husband is not buried there,"

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there," said the old man to me ; " she only pleases herself with thinking that she has hid him there from his enemies : indeed her whole talk now is, as if she thought him still alive ; and moreover, she is always singing a song which she made about him when he first enlisted for a soldier. In a few moments she rose, and returned to us, pointing to the grave with an archness marked upon her countenance, which was the effect of some inward feeling unknown to us, and singing—

" Then Henry said, Dear Susan tell,
Oh, when wilt thou be mine ?
I lov'd the youth, so answer'd strait,
I am, dear Henry, thine.

She finished her song with a sorrowful cadence, that touched our hearts, a momentary silence ensued ; her eyes then became wild, she started, gave a faint shriek, " Hark !" she cried, " it is the drum that beats !—oh, hide my eyes ; don't let me see them tear him away !" She ran to her father and fell upon his neck ; the old man threw down his stick, took hold of her arms, and lowered her by them to the turf : she lay without motion, her eyes almost closed, and nature apparently exhausted. " This often happens," said the old man ; " she will lie thus some minutes, then wake shivering, and ask me to go home with her ; for little as this exertion may have appeared, it is more than she has strength for."

It happened just as the old man had foretold ; she presently opened her eyes, began to tremble violently, raised herself upon her feet, put her left arm through his, then clasped her hands together, and so hung upon him : he stooped down to pick up his stick, and when she perceived that he had taken it up, she said, " Come, father, let us go home ; I have bid Henry good-night."

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The old man bowed us his farewell ; Susan did not appear to notice us : they passed on, and we saw them enter a low cabin at the distance of about half a furlong from the spot where we had met.

I would immediately have followed them, to have learnt the story of their woes ; but the sun was already set, and Emma requested me to ride home, and return to their cot on the following morning.

About eleven o'clock the next day we arrived near the spot where we had seen the wretched pair on the foregoing evening : we left our horses at some distance from the cottage, and walked up to it ; the door was open, and the old man was sitting on the threshold, in order to warm himself in the rays of the sun. We explained to him who we were, and he rose : we enquired for Susan ; he pointed towards a dark corner of the hut, "There she lies, poor sufferer," he said ; "she generally sleeps about this time of the morning, for there is no keeping her in bed at night, especially these moon-light nights, for she then thinks every shade she sees is Henry, and she runs about trying to catch first one shadow, then another."—"You said the story of her Henry's death was a very sad one : have you any objection to repeat it to us ?" I asked. "No, sir ; why should I ?" he replied ; "none of the blame lies with me ; and it is my maxim, sir, that none need be ashamed, but those who have not clear consciences."

My heart glowed as he repeated that sentence ; I then understood how exquisitely happy the virtuous poor can be, even in despite of their vicious oppressors : they will dare to hold up their heads before that tribunal where the rich man will, perhaps, hang down his in trembling. "Come," said I, "let us hear your story : resume your seat, and we will take ours upon this bench."—

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"As your honour gives leave," replied he, "I will sit down; for, in good truth, I am not very able to stand: you are very kind to let me sit down while I am discoursing with you."

Oh, Charles, are not these sad rules of society, that a man of upwards of threescore years, palsied, blind, bent to the ground with care, should have had his ideas about his particular right to the privileges of nature so cramped, as to think it very kind of a man not thirty, full of health, happiness, and enjoyment of his faculties, to let him place his own limbs in that position which contributed most to his own ease, under the roof of his own hovel? These are the distinctions, these distinctions of comfort, which ought to be driven out of society.

"Shall I begin now?" asked the old man.

"We are ready to hear you," I answered.

"My father, sir," he began by saying, "was a hard-working, labouring man in this village, and my mother was as good a woman as any in the place. When I was seven years old, a sad fever raged all about the country; my father and mother both fell ill of it, so did my eldest brother, and it carried off every one of the family except one sister and myself: we had not one friend that would do any thing to help us, and so, as you may suppose, we both came to the parish. Well, sir, we did our duty and worked hard; God prospered us, two helpless orphans as we were, and in time we both of us got, as I may say, to stand upon our own legs; that is, I went to day-labour, and my sister let herself out to take care of a farmer's cows. In the course of time we both married; I came and lived in this cot where I am now sitting, and my sister and her husband dwelt in that cabin yonder that you may see upon the margin of the lake. We had each

one child, and only one a-piece; ours was poor Susan, and my sister's was the Henry that you hear Susan talk and sing about. So you see, my lady, they were cousins before they were sweet-hearts. My sister's husband died when Henry was about sixteen; he worked hard poor lad, and maintained his mother when she was a widow, both honestly and decently; but she did not live long to value the blessing she had in her son, she died on the very day that Henry was twenty years old. My Susan and he had been as fond as two doves ever since they had known what fondness was; and, now Henry was left alone, he pressed me very much to let them be married directly, and live in the cottage where his mother had dwelt. I held out for a good while, saying they were both too young to marry yet a while; but they got the better of me, and in less than a twelve-month they were man and wife. All went on very well for the first six months; Henry worked like a horse, and made Susan as good a husband as could be; they were as happy as the day was long, and my old dame and I were not a little pleased to see them so; and I believe we all lived as comfortable as most poor folks like us, that are forced to suit their wants to their means, can do. But now, sir, comes the beginning of all our troubles. You must know that our lord of the manor was a single gentleman, so he had no children of his own; but he had a nephew that lived in the house with him, and that many folks whispered about was his bastard son; Heaven knows whether they spoke true or false, I can't take upon me to say, I am not his judge, though he has been mine and my children's oppressor. This young man was such a favourite with his uncle, that he had as much authority over him, and could make him do just what he pleased, for all the

world

world as though his uncle had been beholden to him, instead of he standing in debt to his uncle ; for every body said, that, whoever the young 'squire was, he had not a sixpence in the world but what came from our old lord. The old gentleman, I do believe—Heaven rest his soul in death say I—would have been a friend to the poor if he had followed his own will ; but his nephew set him against all people in want, for fear the relieving of their necessities should cut them short of the means to buy his extravagant pleasures.

“ Six months Henry and Susan had been married, when one evening, as Henry was coming home from his daily labour, his road happening to lie past the alehouse, who should be sitting on a bench before the door but one Philip Rose, that had once been servant to the young 'squire, as we always called our old lord's nephew. Henry and he had been well acquainted when Philip lived in our village, so when Philip saw him coming by, he sprang up and shook him by the hand, and told him he was very glad to see him, and asked him to drink part of a mug of ale. This Rose had never been a man whose conduct was much to my liking, but as I had no particular reason for my opinion, I had never done the uncharitable part by him of speaking my mind about him : but what I am now going to tell you, will prove that I was right in what I thought of him. They sat down on the bench before the door, the ale was brought out, and they began to enter into talk : Henry first of all asked him, ‘ What had brought him back to our village, and how he had gained a livelihood since he had left the young 'squire's service ? ’ So Philip made answer that it was a false notion with people, that he had left the 'squire's service, for that he had been in his pay all the time he had
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been gone from our village ; ‘ You must know,’ said he, ‘ that my master is raising a regiment, and I have the honour to be his recruiting serjeant.’ Henry thought at first that Rose had been joking with him, but when he came to look at his great coat, he saw that it had a red cape, and moreover that he had spatterdashies on his legs. Philip smiled to see how unbelieving Henry was, and said, ‘ Why these two young men that are sitting by us, are my drum and fife :’ so, on saying these words, he pulled a drum out from under the bench, and set it between his knees, and began playing upon it with his knuckles. ‘ Do you like a soldier’s life?’ said Henry. ‘ Nothing so well,’ replied Philip ; ‘ should not *you* like to be one of us gay fellows?’ ‘ Not at all,’ said Henry, ‘ for I am married to Susan now : if I were to turn soldier, I must go away and leave her ; and I think it a man’s first duty to stay at home with those to whom he has bound himself as a protector.’— ‘ Every one to his taste,’ answered Philip : ‘ but if you knew what a soldier’s life was, perhaps you would not think as you do now.’— ‘ And perhaps,’ returned Henry, ‘ if you knew the joys of peace and contentment at home with a wife that loves you, you would not be so fond of roving about.’ Rose then called for another mug of ale, and their discourse took a different turn : presently Rose said, putting his hand into his pocket as he spoke, ‘ Do not you remember, Henry, that I am five shillings in your debt?’— ‘ Yes, I do,’ returned Henry. ‘ Why did you not ask me for it?’ replied he. ‘ Because,’ answered Henry, ‘ I could do without it, and I did not wish to distress you to pay it.’— ‘ Oh!’ exclaimed Rose, ‘ I am rich enough now, thank you, and there are two half crowns.’ Henry held out his hand and took them. ‘ Stop,’

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‘Stop,’ cried Philip Rose, ‘here is another shilling.’—‘For what,’ asked Henry, ‘you owed me only five.’—‘For interest to be sure,’ returned Rose. ‘I do not wish for any interest for having served a friend,’ replied Henry. ‘Phoo, nonsense, how you talk!’ says Rose; ‘why it is always our way to throw in a shilling; an’t it, my boys?’ continued he, turning to the drummer and fife. ‘Oh, yes, always,’ replied they. Henry looked uncertain, whether or not it was his right to take it. ‘Rose again spoke, ‘Why take it man,’ cried he, ‘do not think it will hurt me, it is not out of my pocket; it is the king’s money, it is a present his majesty makes you, for having lent a trifle to one of his men; I am his man now you know, come do not affront the king when he offers you money; come take up the shilling,’ continued he, ‘throwing one upon the drum-head, which he still held between his knees. Henry hesitated what to do. ‘Lord help you!’ exclaimed Rose, ‘there’s a man unwilling to take money! do you think I should have made my fortune, if I had done so? I only wish his majesty, god bless him, was here to see you stand shilly shally about it, that’s all I wish; I cannot help laughing at you myself.’ Rose laughed, the drummer and fife did the same, poor Henry thought he was doing wrong not to accept his pretended friend’s offer, and took the shilling off the drum-head.

“No sooner had Henry taken the fatal shilling, than they all shook hands with him, told him that he was now one of the king’s servants like themselves, and that he must go before our lord of the manor, for he was also a justice of the peace, to be sworn.

“Henry, who was unacquainted with the pe-
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hardly understood even now the deceit that had been practised upon him; he said, that they were imposing upon him, that he was no soldier, and that he would not go before the justice. They would not listen to what he said, but began to lead him by force towards the manor house; in their way thither they met poor Susan; she, as you may suppose, was frightened enough at seeing Henry dragged along towards our old lords; and when the children and people who were following told her that Henry had enlisted for a soldier, Susan cried as if her heart would have burst: she came running straitway to me, told me what she had seen, and besought me to go with her to the manor-house; she ran forward, and I hobbled after her as fast as my tottering old limbs could carry me; but when we got there the deed was done, Henry had been over-ruled into taking the oath, and our old lord, I suppose by the desire of his nephew, who might be afraid of losing Henry, as he was in a hurry to complete the number of his regiment—our old lord refused to see us.—Susan could not cry then, she stood like a dumb statue.

“ Well, sir, it tends nothing to my story to repeat to you all poor Henry’s upbraidings of his false friend, his bewailings at his ignorance of the customs of this bad world, and his grief at being obliged to leave his Susan; it is enough to say, that he was forced to put on a red coat. Their parting too, after what I have told you, you can imagine as well as I could describe to you. The squire’s regiment was ordered to some place near London, where it was to lie, till its turn came to sail for America, for thither it was going to fight; and in three weeks time after the villanous trick of entrapping him to be a soldier had been played him,

him, poor Henry was torn from his native village.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed the old man, "I have always endeavoured to be a good christian, and never to let the misfortunes of this world cause me to murmur against God; not even this trial did I suffer to weaken my religion: but I cannot sometimes help wondering why such things are!"

"They are," answered I, "probations of human fortitude; misfortune is the touchstone of the heart, and he who endeavours to feel that he is not aggrieved when most sinned against by man, will doubtless rank highest where the power of man will have no avail."

"Your words, sir," he answered, "are comfort, for they express what I have often thought myself, only I did not so well know how to explain my feelings."

He then proceeded in his narrative by saying: "No sooner was Henry gone, than poor Susan began to go off in a melancholy way, that made her unfit for the labour that she had cheerfully gone through with while Henry was with her; all she would do now was to sit and mope whole hours, and when she had made the song you heard her singing last night, she did nothing but repeat it the whole day long: we took her home to our cottage, and did all we could to keep up her spirits, but it would not do: she was six months gone with child when Henry went away, and at the end of four weeks she was taken in her labour, and suffered more like a sinner, than a saint as she was, in bringing forth a dead child."

The old man paused, wiped away the tear that was stealing down his cheek, then said, "God's will be done! if he punishes here, he will reward hereafter;—God's will be done!"

"Oh,

"Oh," cried I, "how eminently are such minds of religious tranquillity blessed, above those whose pursuits in this life leave them no time to think of the future state; or if its recollection does obtrude upon their senses, comes to them in the awful garb of a scene of retribution!"

The old man bowed assent to my assertion, then continued speaking thus; "Fretting and anxiety had brought on Susan's pains, and my poor dame little thought that she would long survive her infant; in a few days after the birth of her child, she herself began to imagine that her end was fast approaching, she told us so, and we thought it our duty not to give her hopes that we did not believe in ourselves; she said she was resigned to die, and that all she wished and desired was to see Henry once more. For three whole days she did nothing but beseech her mother and myself to let Henry know her situation, and to ask him, if it was possible for him to get a few days furlough, to come and bid her his last farewell. At length, after much entreating, I consented to get our clerk to write all that had happened to Henry: and when she knew that the letter was gone to him, she appeared better in spirits, but her health did not mend.

"A week wore away, and we got no answer from Henry; I began to think that the letter had not reached him: but however, in the dusk of the evening of the tenth day, never shall I forget the moment, the latch moved up, the door opened, and Henry came in. Susan was lying on the outside of the bed, for she was unable to sit up; she shrieked out his name; he ran to her, clasped her in his arms, fixed his eyes upon her, as much as to say, 'Is this the Susan I left seven weeks ago?' shook his head, then cried, 'Dear Susan, I am come to die with you!—I think I shall not

die

die myself, now I see you again,' she said in a faint voice. 'Oh,' returned he, 'let us resolve to die together.'—'Let us live together,' replied Susan gathering strength from his presence.'—'That cannot be,' he said, 'I must die!'—'You! wherefore, Henry?' she asked, her lips quivering as she spoke. He looked upon her in anguish; first he appeared struggling to speak, then striving to keep in the words that seemed to be forcing themselves upon his tongue. Susan repeated her question, 'Wherefore must *you* die, Henry?' It was contrary to his nature to refuse answering a question which Susan asked, his reason was thrown off its guard, and he replied in a voice which I shall ever remember, 'I have deserted!'

"Susan's heart-blood chilled, and she sunk back upon the bed; Henry clasped his hands, and fixed his eyes upon the floor.

The old man's utterance became choaked, he ceased speaking, and an uninterrupted silence reigned for some minutes; at his own time the old man thus went on: "When I became able to speak, I enquired of Henry an explanation of what he had said, and he told us, that on his receiving the letter I had sent to him, stating his wife's ill health, and wish to see him, he had gone to the young squire who was his captain, and besought that he would grant him leave of absence from his regiment only for a few days, that he might once more see his Susan alive; his request was denied, and he instantly formed the resolution of deserting, rejoicing as he said, that his life would thus be very little longer, if so long as her's.

"Oh, sir, it was love for his poor wife, and the cruelty of those that would have kept him from seeing her on her death-bed, as we then all thought

thought her, that made him take this desperate resolution of sacrificing his own life to see her once again.

“ I besought them to take comfort ; I told them that, as things were come to this sad pass, we would all move directly to another part of the country, without telling any of our neighbours whither we were going, or that Henry was with us, and that perhaps fortune might favour us, and these means preserve the dear boy's life. They agreed to my plan with much joy, and I told Henry that he had better set out that very night in the direction I should point out to him, and so endeavour to prevent any one in our village knowing he had been home at all. About midnight he left our cottage, and it was for the last time ; he had not got the length of a furlong from this spot, before he was met by a party of those that were sent in pursuit of him, and made their prisoner. Evil news always travels fast, as they say, and so it was with poor Henry's misfortune ; before day-break a neighbour's daughter, that lived close by the place where it happened, a silly, unguarded girl, came to tell us of it : she meant to do well, but she was inconsiderate ; she told it to us in the hearing of Susan, and from that moment Susan's senses forsook her.”

Again the old man paused, then again continued thus ; “ I went to our lord of the manor, threw myself on my knees before him, explained to him the situation of my daughter, and that the reason of Henry's deserting was to see her once again before she died. I moved our old lord with compassion for our miseries, and he promised me to write to his nephew, and beseech of him to pardon Henry. The old gentleman was as good as his word ; but the young 'squire proved deaf to his petition, and we heard that Henry was
doomed

doomed to undergo the punishment of a deserter. Susan was at this time quite mad, so knew nothing of what was going on. My poor old dame sunk under the woes that were falling upon her children, and in less than a month I followed her to the grave, almost bowed down into the earth with misery myself. Every day I was now expecting to hear that Henry had paid the debt of that life which the cruel laws of man had made him forfeit for having come to see the mother of his child on her death-bed; at last I heard that as it was a time when every soldier's life was of consequence, he had suffered five hundred lashes at the halberd. Poor Henry! little did he think, when he led my girl from church, that he should ever suffer five hundred lashes from the hands of unfeeling strangers, on that back which had borne so many burdens without a murmur to earn her an honest subsistence, only because he had come to see her once again on her death-bed!" The old man wept, and it must have been a heart of stone that could have refused him the sympathy of a tear. In a few moments he continued; Not a week after I had heard this, worse tidings reached me; only three days after Henry's punishment, his regiment was ordered to embark, and, notwithstanding the state he was in, he was taken out of his bed to be carried on ship-board: a cold settled in his wound, a mortification ensued, and he died in undescrivable agonies! Oh, how the poor lad must have wished to have been in his own cabin, with his dear Susan! But he had one consolation, he had nothing to reproach himself with; for his own inclination would have kept him contented at home in his own cabin, with his own dear Susan; and surely, though it was a crime in the law of man, it could be no vice in

in the eye of God for him to have come to see his Susan once again on her death-bed !”

The old man then concluded his story in a few broken sentences ; he said, that when his daughter’s malady had turned upon her brain, her health though in a sad state, had not grown worse ; that it was now almost five years since the death of Henry ; that he himself had been deprived of his sight for the last three years ; and that they subsisted on a small weekly sum allowed to them by the parish in which they lived : farther, that their lord of the manor had at first been their friend, but that he had not many months survived Henry ; and that his nephew, their enemy, although heir to his uncle’s estates, had not been to the village since Henry’s death, but was seeking promotion in the army.

“ You shall go and live at the next village, and partake of the bounties of my mother, Mrs. Hughford,” said Emma.

“ Heaven bless her !” replied the old man ; I know her name for a worthy one, but I cannot go away from this spot.”

“ What is your reason ?” asked Emma.

“ My poor girl,” he answered, “ would not be so happy any-where as here : if we were to go an hundred miles off, she would find her way back to the turf where she thinks she has hid Henry and I cannot find in my heart to deny her the only pleasure she can enjoy.”

“ You shall live here, then,” said Emma, “ under my care, and you shall once again taste those comforts which your age and situation require.”

“ God will reward you,” returned he ; “ indeed we find it hard enough to live, few as our wants are.”

“ How

"How much," asked I, "are you allowed a week for the maintenance of yourself and your daughter?"

"Only eighteen-pence, sir," he answered.

"Only eighteen-pence!" I exclaimed, "for the maintenance of two souls during seven days, when I give as much for a single meal for the dog that points out to me a hare or a partridge!"

Emma shook her head to me as I pronounced the sentence; I turned from her, and made a silent vow never to take up a gun again.

A long and deep sigh drew my attention from the subject to which my thoughts were immediately given: I looked to the spot from whence it came, and saw the poor maniac raising herself upon her bed. She did not regard us, but took a bunch of straw from behind her pillow, and began weaving it into a garland; in a few minutes she fixed her eyes upon it, and sang—

"They have torn thee from me, Henry;
But still I'll think on thee:
And in thy absence, true love,
This crown my mate shall be."

As she concluded these lines, she raised her eyes toward heaven, with another deep sigh, and pressed the straw to her bosom, while the tears trickled down her cheeks.

After what we had been listening to from the old man, our feelings were ill-calculated to witness any more of the scene before us: we each put half a guinea into the hand of the father, promised to see him again, and departed. He did not thank us in words; but he put forth his hands in an attitude of silent benediction, that drew from my eyes the tears I had hitherto with difficulty suppressed.

Make

Make your own comments, I shall offer none on this touching scene of nature ; adieu ; and believe me truly,

Yours,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

LETTER XXVI.

Major Seymour to Sir Charles Melford.

MY DEAR CHARLES,

Kirton.

I HAVE for these last seven days been silently murmuring at not having heard from you, and I now find that the error lay not in you, but in the person in London whom I had commissioned to forward my letters to this place ; for I this morning received a packet containing four epistles from you, and with such contents as, in my opinion, are better calculated to adorn a romance, than to make a part of the history of an existing man.— Why, what a farago of adventure has befallen you ! You are almost the Quixote of your day, and I shall expect to hear that you have set up to rival that famous knigh-errant. But enough of jesting ; this is the subject on which my interest in your welfare will not suffer me long to be pleasant. Charles, can you want me to point out to you, that the Marvaldi family have determined upon you as their prey ? The wife assails you with her pretended secret favour, and the husband plots to draw you into a marriage with his daughter. The Count di Rebini, who is on the spot

spot with them, has long ago given you a warning that all within the Pallazo di Marvaldi is not as it should be, and yet you want admonitions to save you from falling the dupe of those that it contains. If you have not entirely lost that good sense which you once possessed, and, what is more material in the present case, if you will persuade yourself to view the transactions of which you have written me an account with your eyes open, you cannot but perceive, and very plainly too, that there is a league formed to draw you into some snare, which is to benefit the Marvaldi family, and that the success of it depends upon your believing that the actions of the husband and wife are unconnected. Oh, my dear friend, how severely would you have censured a man who had acted as you have yourself done, if you had been a cool looker-on upon his conduct: why will you be more blind to what concerns yourself, than you would be to the interest of another? What, if you consider the matter with your senses unbiassed by any momentary titulation of false passion, can be the motive of that man who offers his daughter to a rich stranger, in preference to giving her hand to a man whom she knows and loves, with a decent competency? and, still more of the woman who, under the outward garb of modesty and virtue, voluntarily sacrifices her honour in private, and asks a few pieces of gold in recompence for its loss? What can you decide, but that both must be mercenary and despicable? I could adduce a long string of arguments in support of what I have advanced; but I am certain that, if you will but reflect for only five minutes, danger must so forcibly stare you in the face, that you cannot want farther persuasion to leave Italy while you are safe; I mean, while your hand and fortune are still your own. Depend upon

upon it, there is some deeply planned scheme hanging upon the Marchesa Laura's appearance at the inn upon the road; for God's sake avoid her as you would determined ruin. Her looks must have assisted her words in pleading to you in her interest; for her words, at least as I coolly read them over, as written by you, appear to me only purposely enigmatical, that your eagerness for the solution of the riddle which is wrapped in them, may make you continue to believe yourself pleased with her society, till some view which she doubtless has upon you is accomplished. Perhaps, when you will receive this paper, the truth of my conjecture will already have appeared to you; pray Heaven my surmise may only lean to the side of fear, as it is inclined by my interest in your happiness, and that my surmise may prove false.

Pardon me, my dear fellow, but I much fear that the motive from which you first professed to visit the continent, that of culling the flowers of knowledge which you should find adorning a foreign soil, has been nearly, if not wholly, absorbed in your attention to such pleasures as both weaken the mind, and render the understanding less avid than it otherwise would be after more substantial enjoyments.

Recollect, Charles, that, at setting out, you said, your adventures were to be told alternately with the occurrences that had befallen me since our last separation, as we should sit round a winter fire with our wives: will the recital of how your time has been passed, think you, furnish proper entertainment for the ears of my Emma and your Margareta? Oh, my dear friend, reflect before it is too late; I only ask you to consider your own happiness; believe me, you can never permanently find it in those tinsled pleasures which

which only touch the senses ; it is to be met with, in perfection, in those joys alone which sink into the mind. Remember, that an action which will not bear reflecting upon ; and which does not charm as much in the retrospect as it did in its beginning, cannot be a portion of true happiness. Do not think lightly of what I have said ; I have always called myself, and I think the exigency of the moment now calls upon me to prove, as far as words can convince you, that *I am*,

Your friend,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

P. S. Direct your letters for me immediately to this place.

LETTER XXVII.

Mrs. Wallace to Sir Charles Melford.

HONOURED SIR,

Rosehill, Rutlandshire.

THE occasion of my making so free as to trouble you with this scrawl, is in the behalf of my son Edward, whom you used to be so condescending as to notice when your honour and he were both boys. He has a petition to make to you, and he has persuaded me that it will come better to you from me, than it would do from him, he not having seen your honour of many years. You must recollect, sir, that Edward always had a turn for a soldier's life, and that, much against my consent, he went out to America as a corporal in a marching regiment at the beginning of the war. It has now, as your honour must certainly have heard,

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pleased

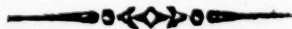
pleased Almighty God to be good to us, and send us a peace : the company that my son Edward belongs to is come home, and he with it, Heaven be thanked, alive and well, and promoted to be an ensign. Edward, sir, has now been home at my cottage this month and more; he has done his duty in the profession that he first took a liking to, and now he wishes to settle for the remainder of his life in some honest occupation in his own country. His father was a farmer, and he inclines to become one also. I have some money, sir, as you know; the sale of Edward's commission will raise some little more; and it shall be laid out in the way he best likes, for he is a worthy lad, and deserves all I can do for him. Now, sir, farmer Furrow tells me, that he has some land left him in a distant county, and that on this account he would be very glad to give up his lease of your Briar-bank farm next quarter-day, if it was agreeable to you to make it over to another tenant. I have spoken to your steward about it, and find from him that farmer Furrow has just begun a fourteen years' lease upon it: and sir, if it might but meet your will to transfer this lease to Edward, you would bind his heart in gratitude to you for ever. I know your goodness too well to fear that you should not pardon me for the liberty I have taken in addressing you, whether you grant me the favour I ask of you or not. I should not have written to you while you were at such a distance from home, only I was afraid somebody else might hear of farmer Furrow's wish to quit, and be beforehand with me in an application to you, knowing what fine land Briar-bank farm is, and moreover how kind a landlord is your honour.

The sweet girl whom your humanity and goodness placed under my care is as happy as a comfortable

fortable plenty and a heart free from anxiety or self-reproach can make her : she always was very handsome, as your honour knows ; but her attentive behaviour to me, and the gratitude she expresses for your kindness to her, make me think her almost as beautiful as an angel : I hope it is no sin in me to compare her to an angel : for indeed, sir, she is quite good enough to be one. She knows that I am writing to you, and desires I will mention her thanks and remembrances to you in the most respectful manner I am able. Edward begs to join with me in duty to your honour ; and, hoping you will oblige us with a few lines in answer to this, I beg leave to subscribe myself, with all respect,

Your honour's most obliged
and humble servant,
ELIZABETH WALLACE.

P.S. Your steward, sir, has been so kind as to undertake to send this letter safe ; for I did not know where to direct to you.



LETTER XXVIII.

Sir Charles Melford to Mrs. Wallace.

Rome.

I AM sorry, Mrs. Wallace, that you should address me in a stile of obligation upon a petition by which you are in reality conferring an honour upon me ; there is not any circumstance from which a man derives more credit, and upon which he has

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a right

a right to feel so proud, as when his respectable neighbours declare his wish to become his tenants. It has ever been my maxim Mrs. Wallace, that though the landlord is necessary to his tenants, the tenants are far more necessary to the landlord. Tell your son Edward, that whenever farmer Furrow thinks good to give up his lease of Briarbank farm, it will give me much pleasure to have him tenant it, and that I shall immediately give orders to my steward to that effect : and, my good friend, take this hint to yourself, that what you said about your own money matters, and the sale of Edward's commission, was the only part of your letter which I do not choose to pardon you for having written. I have called your son my friend in my boyish days, and I shall not turn usurer upon his property or your's, now I am arrived at year's of judgment. Your son shall find the farm ready stocked, and when I want money, we will talk about the means by which he is to repay me ; and, till I do this, do not mention any thing to me about the subject, as you value my friendship. You are a woman of sense, and as such, I dare say, like a reason for every thing which is said or done ; as, therefore, I suppose you will not be satisfied without my assigning some motive for the command I have just laid upon you, I'll give it you now, that I may prevent your speaking upon the subject when we meet : well, then, in good truth, to confess things as they are, my motive is, what I dare say you little expected to hear, a very selfish one, and lest you should not believe me, now I have declared to you, I will explain it : if a landlord upholds his tenants, I am persuaded they will never desert him. So you see, instead, as you might perhaps imagine, my conferring a favour on your son, I am in reality only piling up a mass of interest for myself.

Let

Let this true state of the case silence your scruples, if you had any before I had thus clearly pointed out to you my motive, and tell Edward, that if he offers me one penny of rent before he has gathered in the crops of fourteen summers, I shall turn him off at a minutes warning both from my land and my heart. Tell him also, that I am much pleased with the idea of his coming to be my neighbour ; that I shall certainly be in England next autumn ; and that we will then together visit the old haunts where we have before put up many a hare and partridge.

Your assurance of Margaretta Hayton's health and happiness gave me much satisfaction : remember that, during my absence, you are my proxy, and do not (I now repeat to you what I urged to you on my leaving England) suffer her too great delicacy, and too nice sense of what she thinks high obligations on her part to me, to curtail her of any additional means of comfort or happiness which she would take, if the power of procuring them were her own.

Farewell, my good friend : remember me with kindness to Margaretta, and with friendship to your son ; and believe me truly,

Yours,

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XXIX.

Sir Charles Melford to Major Seymour.

DEAR GEORGE,

Rome.

I WAS just sitting down to make you my acknowledgments for the pathetic tale of Henry and Susan which you sent to me, when a second letter from you, on a subject more immediately interesting to my feelings, was brought to me. Why, my dear friend, what gloomy elf can have taken possession of your ideas while you were writing to me, to have made it possible for you to have appeared so fully persuaded, that, because a man had happened to have offered me his daughter in marriage, his wife to have selected me as the object of her private amusements, and that wife and husband afterwards to quarrel, that there must undoubtedly be a plan formed between them for the undoing of that third person, to whom they had before been thus particularly in their attentions; and moreover, that there must be some tale hanging by a woman's flying from her husband in disguise? and this part of the story I believed to be so common an event now-a-days, that not even you would have thought it particular enough to comment upon. Well, my dear George, I thank you most sincerely, however, for the interest which I am sure you take in my fate, and the true friendship and concern with which you deliver your admonitions to me: believe me, I respect them; but I must also say, in my

my own vindication, that I do not feel myself under the strict necessity of attending to them that you seem to imagine me. I am not the first man who has received the favours of a married woman, nor who has had a young girl offered to him in marriage by her father; others have escaped safely from these accidents which you seem to estimate great dangers, and why should not I? Nay, I have already escaped; I have left the Marchese and his daughter by leaving Venice, and the Marchesa voluntarily tore herself away from me, when we met by accident upon the road. So, George, do as I do, think no more of this strange complication of adventures; for it is almost a thousand to one, whether I ever again see any one of the Marvaldi family; and if I should, depend upon it, that I am fortified, both by my own resolutions and your admonitions, against any evil which might accrue to me from the rencontre. Rely on this, George, that though I may accidentally dip into transitory pleasures, I will never suffer them to take sufficient root in my mind to undermine the foundation of that lasting happiness which I promise myself in my union with Margaretta.

I learnt two days since by a letter which Mrs. Wallace wrote to me relative to some land of mine, that Margaretta was well and happy; the assurance of her being so, and particularly of her being so through my means, communicated a glow of pleasure to my heart, which convinced me she had not lost her hold on my affections.

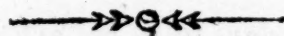
I have now been four days in Rome, and have seen most of the wonders it contains, both antique and modern; but I shall not describe to you what I have seen, at least I shall save it to furnish matter

ter of conversation when we meet, for were I to write it, I could only relate to you in other words what you have already often read from the pens of men more able to give the account with accuracy than myself.

I think the time at which you hinted that your nuptials were to be solemnised must be near at hand; may you, when the desired event has taken place, enjoy, uninterrupted, every blessing which a man like yourself cannot well fail to possess when united to the woman whom similarity of mind has led him to choose as the partner of his journey through life. If, on the presumption of my friendship with you, I may already be allowed to hold communication with your Emma, tell her that there is a man in the world anxiously desiring to have an opportunity of personally congratulating her on becoming the wife of his friend. Farewell; and believe me truly,

Yours,

CHARLES MELFORD.



LETTER XXX.

Major Seymour to Sir Charles Melford,

Kirton,

SINCE I wrote to you last, my dear Charles, I have acquired an importance in the world, of which every man ought to be proud—I am become
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the lawful protector of a virtuous woman, and call myself husband. The third morning from my present date gave me the hand of my Emma; and the simple solemnity of rural respect which accompanied the religious rites of the occasion, have stamped a reflection of gratitude towards the villagers upon my heart, which I can never forbear contemplating with pleasure when my ideas return back to the scenes of that happy day. You must indulge me in repeating to you what has so interested my feelings. I have already told you that the manners of Mrs. Hughford are those of former days; our marriage, she has honoured me by saying, was the most pleasing event she ever had anticipated; thus of course it was determined by her long before it took place, that it should be celebrated with all the customs of old English respect and hospitality. You will understand by this, Charles, that I was not to make my appearance on the wedding morning with my clothes dragged on by chance, my hair uncombed, and my boots on my legs, to meet my bride in a cloth habit and a whip in her hand; to throw ourselves into a post-chaise the moment the ceremony had taken place; ride all day as fast as four horses were able to carry us; wear away the hours in yawning and dozing, at best in counting milestones; reach a solitary inn by the roadside at dark, and pass the evening in a hum-drum tête-à-tête; as has lately been the fashionable method of all couples spending the first twelve hours after their becoming inseparable. This was a method of doing things which Mrs. Hughford would have thought a profanation of the day, and a disgrace to the parties most concerned in the events of it. In correspondence with what I knew to be her wish, the suit I wore was now; Emma was habited entirely in white, her dress was of the

richest materials, and presented to her by her mother ; Mrs. Hughford was also in white, so were Mrs. Amherst and two young ladies of the neighbourhood, who had been invited to officiate as bride-maids. On our first appearance in the morning Mrs. Hughford met us, gave us some material admonitions upon the state into which we were going to enter, and when these were ended, she addressed me by saying : “ At my death, Mr. Seymour, you will become lord of this manor ; I have ever been respected myself by those who live upon it, and I wish the same esteem to attach to you ; as therefore I think that nothing sooner begets the love of those we live amongst, than suffering them to witness us in such scenes as that which is this day about to take place, and to enjoy with us the festivity which ought to accompany such an occasion, I hope you will not object to walking to the village church this morning, and afterwards to meeting my tenantry at dinner in the great hall.” I could start no objection to this proposition, indeed I felt none, for I had caught the glow of universal hospitality and good will, which was playing about the heart of the old lady, and giving fire to her eye and colour to her cheek. I next understood that our walk was to be in procession. When we were to set out, all the servants appeared prepared to attend us, the men with immense white favours in their hats, the women wearing them pinned on their breasts. Emma headed the procession accompanied by Mr. Amherst, who had taken upon him the office of her father for the day ; Mrs. Hughford, who is unable to walk, came next rolled along in her garden chair, Mrs. Amherst and myself moving by her side ; next followed the bride’s maids and men in pairs ; and the servants walked at a proper distance behind.

When

When we arrived at the park-gate, which stands not above a couple of hundred yards distant from the village church, we were met by twelve little girls, cottagers' children, neatly clad, with white ribbands tied in their hair, and with each a small basket of flowers hung on her left arm; they headed our procession, strewing their flowers in our path. The church-yard was crowded with spectators, who bowed respectfully to us as we passed along. At the church-door the little girls left us; and when we had entered the church, and were advancing towards the altar, all the persons whom we had seen in the church-yard came in to witness the performance of the ceremony. The clergyman is a respectable old man, whose voice is calculated to give weight to the words he uttered. On the ceremony being ended, while we were receiving the congratulations of those around us, all the bells which Kirton steeple can boast only three) set out the merry jingle which was to announce, as far as their sound extended, that "the deed was done." We then placed ourselves in order, to return to the hall, with this only difference, that Emma and I now headed the procession. At the door of the church the little girls again met us, and having presented us each with a nosegay of roses and myrtle, received a present from Emma, and retired. We passed through the church-yard amidst the blessings and congratulations of those assembled in it; and on our return home we were both embraced by Mrs. Hughford, received her blessing, and had our hands again joined by her.

Against our return a sumptuous breakfast, of which wedding cake made no inconsiderable part, was prepared; chocolate had been handed to us before our going to church, so tea and coffee were the liquids of the present meal. Breakfast had
not

not been ended half an hour, before the tenants who were invited to dinner came dropping in, in knots, to pay their congratulations to the bride and myself : Mrs. Hughford received them in her best drawing-room hung with the family portraits : a door opens from it upon the lawn before the hall, and the time till dinner was passed in walking upon it, some of the party retiring to the drawing-room at intervals, to regale themselves with a slice of cake, and a glass of Cape wine.

Dinner was spread on two long tables in the hall : at the head of one sat Mrs. Hughford, with Emma on her left and myself on her right hand ; at the second table, where the minor tenants were regaled, Mrs. Hughford's steward presided. After the cloth was removed, our healths, as you may conclude, were drank in bumpers. Singing was the next entertainment resorted to ; and a variety of old ditties, such as, "Haste to the wedding," &c were then chaunted, both by those who had voices and those who had not : some of them however, considering they were delivered by the pupils of nature, were not ill sung. One air in particular pleased me ; it was a duet sung by the two girls who officiated as bride's maids, one was the daughter of a farmer in the village, the other his niece ; the lines had been composed by them for the occasion, and adapted to some old music, and I think, considering them to have been written by two girls whose education cannot be supposed to have been much attended to in the nicer parts of instruction, they are not unworthy of being transcribed by me, or read by you. These are they :

Arcadian shepherds to Love's altar bring
The choicest of fruits and the flow'rs of the Spring.
Advancing towards it they merrily sing ;

Soft

Soft moments of love,
 The God's choicest gift !
 Sweet pleasures of love,
 Why fly ye so swift ?
 Oh tarry, oh tarry, and lengthen our blifs !

Then from his soft bed, see the God of love rise,
 While fire that burns heart sparkles bright in his eyes ;
 And thus to his vot'ries he courteous replies :

Those moments of love,
 The gift of the skies !
 Those pleasures of love,
 You so highly prize ;

'Tis Hymen's bright torch that must lengthen their blifs !

Then hither, Love, transport thy bow'r ;
 Hither, oh Hymen, bring thy pow'r :
 Sincerer hearts thou ne'er didst see
 Upon thine altar blaze.

Than those to-day in wedlock joined ;
 Ah, guide them thro' love's maze.

If when you have read these lines you begin to criticise upon them, you are not the man of sense I imagine you to be ; remember that they are the efforts of those who ought to be commended for their endeavours, and not despised because their attempts have not reached perfection : the truly sensible man will never condemn the humble flights of genius ; it is only those who are more ignorant themselves, than the persons they attempt to ridicule, who fall into this mean error. Oh, would but these railers consider how very difficult to fashion is the most trifling composition, and how very far short they themselves would in all probability fall, even of what they condemn, were they to take up the pen, I think none but the decidedly ill-natured, the envious, or the incorrigibly ignorant, would continue the pitiful practice, of satirising the productions of another's brain.

But

But I am stepping aside from the description which I set out with giving you. While the tables were removing from the hall, we had tea made for us in the antique drawing-room; we then returned to the hall, and a sprightly dance, in which we were joined by the tenantry, followed by suitable refreshments, concluded the amusements of the day; and a happy day it was, Charles, not only because it gave me the hand of my Emma, but I also enjoyed mixing with the children of nature, and seeing them respecting the worth of her who was the mother of the entire group.

I now feel myself completely blessed: may you ere it is long taste that serene felicity which now smiles on me in an amiable wife, and a heart contented to seek pleasure in the circle of its domestic connections! Farewel; and believe me,

Yours affectionately,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.



LETTER XXXI.

Sir Charles Melford to Major Seymour.

Rome.

I MUST write again, my dear Seymour upon the old subject, and I am well aware that you will again condemn me. Indeed, I am almost beginning to think myself, that I seem born to adventure; but be that as the fates have ordained it; and do you blame me, if you are cold-hearted enough not to feel sentiments similar to mine; for I cannot summon sufficient resolution—infamy, I was going to say—to desert any woman in distress,

trials, much less a woman whom I have so intimately known as the Marchesa Laura. But I am speaking in an incoherent style, which you cannot at present understand; I must collect my ideas, and relate to you the past occurrences as they happened to me.

Two evenings ago, about the hour of twilight, I was walking in one of the most public streets of this city; as I turned the corner of a square; I observed, at about the distance of fifty yards before me, a woman tawdrily dressed, whose pace was irregular, and who appeared uncertain whether to proceed in the direction she was moving, or to return back. I had followed her about five minutes, and my eyes were now turned to some other object, when a shriek in the direction she was walking called my eyes back to her, and I observed her just in time to see her fall down upon the pavement. I quickened my step towards the spot where she was lying; several persons were already gathered about her when I arrived at it, and from some of those who had been nearest to her when she fell I understood that she was in a fit. The woman who excited our attention groaned, and appeared in violent agony; in a few moments a man brought out a light from the shop before the door of which she had fallen, a bystander took it at his hand, and held it to the face of the female on the ground; guess my astonishment, Seymour—it was the Marchesa Laura! pale, emaciated, stretched in the public street in a fit! When my surprise sufficiently abated to return me the power of action, I ran into the shop, besought the people in it to fetch her into their house, and to endeavour to disperse the crowd. They thought her, no doubt, other than she was, and appeared at first unwilling to oblige me; I offered to make them any recompence they should require,

quire, if they would but perform what I required of them; they now consented, the Marchesa was brought into the shop apparently lifeless, and the door closed upon the inquisitive spectators who were gathered round it. Water was sprinkled in her face, and scents held to her nostrils by the people of the house, but for a considerable time no signs of returning life appeared; at length, with a sudden motion, she raised one of her hands to her mouth, and attempted to bite it, but her strength failed, and it again dropped down; the rim of a glass filled with water was now inserted between her lips; she fixed her teeth against it, swallowed a little of the liquid it contained, then opened her eyes languidly, cast them round with a look of enquiry, folded her hands upon her breast, and groaned. I moved opposite to her, and spoke a few words to her in the gentlest accent I could command; she did not seem to recollect my person, but on hearing my voice she uttered a faint shriek, and again sunk lifeless into the arms of the woman who was supporting her. The people of the shop said, that as my presence seemed to agitate her, I had better retire from her sight till she was somewhat more recovered than she had been when I had addressed her. I took their advice and went into a distant part of the shop, where I could be witness to what passed without being seen by her. She was longer in reviving this time than she had been before; at length she again opened her eyes, shivered violently, caught the glass of water from the hand of the person who was holding it, and drank greedily for a few seconds; then stopping suddenly, she burst into tears, and said, "For pity's sake give me a morsel of bread, I have not eaten these two days."

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Some refreshment was brought to her, she eat a few mouthfuls, then sickened from the weak state to which she had been reduced by abstinence, and refused to take any more; again she drank of the water that had been placed by her, again gave vent to her tears, and her strength and spirits then appearing in some small degree renovated, she enquired whether she had not within these few last minutes seen an English gentleman near her. I came forward to answer her question myself: on my approaching her, she took my hand, kissed it with emotion, and said, "God be praised that I have one friend near me to close my eyes."—"Why are you here in this miserable situation?" I asked, hardly sensible of what I said; "on what account are you here alone?"—"To die!" she answered in a tone that thrilled my heart. I was not able immediately to reply, and she went on saying, "I am able to walk home now, if you will lend me your arm."—"You are not yet sufficiently recovered," I returned. "Oh yes, I am," she replied; "and you will much oblige me if you will be my safe-guard; I am so weak, I dare not trust myself to walk alone." I again besought her not to venture abroad till her strength was better restored, but she persisted in going; I accordingly recompensed the people of the house as I had promised to do, held out my arm to the Marchesa, and when she had put her's through it we went out into the street. "You must direct me," I said; "where do you live?"—"I'll show you," she answered; "but pray do not oblige me to talk, or walk fast, for my very heart-strings ache with the least exertion." We proceeded in silence down a back-street, and from thence into a narrow alley; she stopped opposite to a very mean house, and said, "Knock at that door." I followed her request, and the door

door was opened by a decrepid old woman, whose appearance, as well as that of the house, was extreme poverty. "Which is this lady's room?" I asked. "Up stairs," said the woman; I took a light from the table, and led the way up stairs, which fronted the door, into a chamber of as miserable appearance as the room below; the Marchesa followed me, staggered to the bed, and sunk upon it. "You must have a physician," I said. "Oh, in pity," she replied, "do not attempt to prolong the existence of a wretched outcast like myself."—Do not talk thus, "I rejoined; "circumstance may have reduced your health, and darkened for a while your prospects of happiness in life, but you must not therefore despond."—"Oh, that I were already dead!" she cried, and burst into tears.

The woman of the house now came into the apartment, and I told her to go and fetch some medical aid to her lodger; the woman replied, that she believed kitchen physic would be her best remedy, for poverty was her disease. I gave her money, and told her to buy and prepare whatever could contribute to the comfort of the Marchesa; she went out to do as I had desired her, and I remained meanwhile watching by the bed-side of the Marchesa, but unable to persuade her to enter into a conversation upon her present situation, or the circumstances which had reduced her to it; indeed her very weak state rendered most of the words she did speak inarticulate. When the woman returned, the Marchesa said, "Since you say that I must not die, I will try to take a little food, and then endeavour to sleep; but pray leave me for to-night, I feel that I have not strength to support a conversation even five minutes longer." I was standing by her, she once more took my hand, kissed it, her tears falling upon it as she held it; then

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then added, " May heaven bless you, generous Englishman, dear, worthy Carlo !" I then left her, having obtained her permission to call again in the morning, but I did not quit the house till I had commanded the woman who kept it to omit no endeavours for restoring the health of her lodger.

After I had left the house, I wandered for some time about the streets in thought, and then returned home to my lodgings to pass a night of conjecture rather than sleep. It would be useless to repeat to you all the ideas that floated in my brain ; I shall therefore now give you an account of what passed between the Marchesa and myself on the following morning.

On entering the house, I enquired of the old woman, whom I met below, how the lady up stairs did ?—" Bad enough, poor soul," she returned ; " Maria help her !"—" You think her worse then ?" said I. " Not better I am sure, the woman answered. " Then," replied I, " go directly and bring to her some medical assistance ; but first enquire of her, whether she will see me this morning :—" " Pray walk up," said the woman, " she desired that when you called I would admit you." I went up stairs and found her in bed ; but, good God ! how altered a countenance did she wear to that which I had been accustomed to see grace the Marchesa di Marvaldi ! she was very pale, and much thinner than when I had parted from her in Venice, and her features appeared to me already extended by approaching death. I moved towards the bed ; she held out her hand, and I gave her mine ; she motioned for me to sit down by the bed ; I complied with her signal. " Oh, Carlo," she then said, " I know not whether to thank you for having saved me last night from death ; I must have died but for your interposition, and I almost believe

believe it had been the happiest thing that could have befallen me."—"Endeavour," I returned, "to keep up your spirits, your malady appears most to press upon them; I have sent for a physician to attend you; but I entreat you to tell me, what cause has reduced you to this sad situation, that I may the better understand how to act in your behalf."—"That cause," said she, "I have already repeatedly told you, I dare not divulge; its revelation would be a crime for which my soul must atone; you cannot, I am sure, now I have said thus much, wish me to disclose it?"—"What am I to think," I asked, "of the situation in which I last night found you?—of seeing you the tenant of this wretched chamber?"—"Think and believe," she returned, "that even this place to rest my aching head upon is a comfort beyond what I have the means of longer procuring for myself; driven from Venice, I fled for an asylum to this city; I hired this room, and for many days kept myself its prisoner, tasting only what the necessities of life required; at length the little I possessed, although thus frugally used, was gone; for the two last days and nights before you saw me, my tears and groans were all my nourishment, all my society: starving nature at last obtained dominion over inclination; with disgust I dressed myself in the few ornaments I had remaining, and at the dusk of yesterday evening I rushed into the streets, resolved to procure the means of appeasing the pangs of hunger, though I should return to hate myself: my limbs were more friendly to me than my heart, for they refused to bear me to my humiliation; an indescribable agony seized me, and I fell on the spot where you found me." What answer could I make to this lamentable description of her miseries, but a promise of my protection? and she received it with a gratitude

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that almost overpowered my feelings, as much as her own. "I have no friend on earth but you," she cried; "and Heaven must reward you, for I never can!" I was about to reply, when the old woman returned with an administer of physic. After having questioned his patient counted her pulse, he told us that her disorder principally originated in weakness. and agitation of spirits; that he would give her a medicine to compose the latter, and advised that she should take nourishing food to recruit her strength: he then retired, saying he would call on the following day at the same hour: I took care to see that what the physician had recommended should be attended to, and departed. I called again in the evening and found the Marchesa's health already somewhat improved by the good nursing which had been given her through the day.

That she should refuse to confide to me the cause of her misfortunes, does not appear so strange to me as it once did, now she has told me, 'that the disclosure would be a crime for which her soul must atone.' She is a Roman catholic, Seymour, and silence has most probably been imposed on her by the church; it is no matter of surprise then, that a woman educated to revere the blessings, and tremble at the anathemas of priests, should act as she does. However, be it as it may, it is enough for me that I see her in misery, and that humanity commands me to be her friend.

I saw her twice yesterday, and found her much improved both in health and spirits; she seemed desirous of entering into conversation at both my visits, but I remained with her only a few minutes each time, fearful that the exertion of talking to me, which I could not prevail upon her to forbear doing, should cause her to relapse.

I have

I have been to her once this morning, and find her cheerfulness and appearance equally mended; I shall call upon her in the afternoon, and request that against I see her again she will have taken into her consideration by what means I can contribute towards securing her future days from the horrid miseries to which her past life has lately been exposed; when I have her answer to this question, you shall hear from me again.

From what I now write to you, George, I think your fears of any evil being planned against me by the Marvaldi family must vanish; you cannot, I think, pretend to suppose that the sufferings which the Marchesa has lately been enduring can have been feigned for the sake of promoting any end in view; had you seen her, as I have done, you must have cast aside doubt and pitied as I did.

For the act of humanity I have performed, all the return I wish is your commendation; to receive it from you will be the greatest pleasure of,

Yours truly,
CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER XXXII.

Sir Charles Melford to Major Seymour.

DEAR GEORGE,

Rome.

WHEN I returned to the Marchesa on the following morning, I asked her, whether she had given any thought to the point which I had desired her to consider. Her answer, as nearly as

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as I can recollect, was in the following words ;
 “ You have desired me to speak my sentiments freely ; I owe you every thing ; I have found you noble, generous, and a man of honour ; and I am resolved to lay open my heart to you with all the frankness that the tie by which I am bound will permit me to do. I repeat what I have before told you, that I am not unprincipled in heart, though you have known me in a situation for which virtue must brand me with eternal infamy. Oh, God ! the agonies that preceded, and the pangs that followed, our private meeting in the casino of the Marchese di Marvaldi !—never, never can I forget what I that evening suffered !—I bound you at that hour by a mysterious vow, of which you cannot have forgotten the import ; you must remember it, for you have adhered to it, and with the blessings of a wretched heart I thank you for having observed it. The unfortunate transaction of that evening—O holy Maria !” exclaimed she, interrupting herself, “ why I am constrained to speak upon this hateful subject !” She paused, then continued ; “ But it must be for once spoken upon, that it may hereafter for ever be forgotten ; my humiliation of that moment, signor, will never be repeated ;—oh what language did my cruel destiny then oblige me to use to a man whom I had scarcely seen before ! Believe not that I felt what I at that hour expressed to you ; I did not feel the shameful passion I pretended to confess ; you had then touched my heart no more than the most indifferent being of the creation ; but my feelings towards you are now changed ; your honour has long gained my respect, your benevolence has now excited my warmest gratitude, and from beholding you with coldness, I have now learnt to adore you. But do not mistake my words ; I do not mean to say that

that I behold you with passion ; feelings of that nature are dead in me ; I would have you understand, that I reverence you for possessing a heart that has taught you to pity my miseries. I have told you with how horrid a resolution of prolonging life I rushed into the streets on that evening when you found me without a friendly arm to rest my burning head upon, or a pitying hand to close my dying eyes ; you snatched me from the jaws of death !—I returned home to pass a night, not of repose, but of reflection ; I saw the extent of the sin I had been about to commit, and I resolved to meet Death, at whatever moment and in however dreadful a form he might summon me, without having done a voluntary crime to atone for hereafter. I am steady to my word, firm in my resolution ; I can meet my fate without alarm ; tell me, therefore, before I say that I will accept any farther protection from you, will you promise me, upon the honour of a man, such as you have ever appeared to me, that you will banish from every word and action of your future life, if possible from your memory, the recollection of your ever having known me as any other than the object of your benevolence ?—will you promise me this ?” She affected me more by the impressive manner in which she urged this petition than I can describe to you. This proof of the worth of her heart, when under the guidance of her own mind, interested me more in her misfortunes than I had ever been before, and I immediately answered, “ By Heaven and my own honour I am from this moment only your friend.”

She attempted to speak, but her tears prevented her utterance ; and, if I had not caught her by her hands and prevented her, she would have thrown herself upon her knees before me in gratitude for my promise.

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When at length she could articulate, she said, "Generous, worthy Englishman!—I will now explain to you by what single act you can render me service, and make life tolerable to me."—"Speak it," said I. "I have already," she returned, "trespassed so far upon your benevolence, that I fear what I shall now advance will appear a mean encroachment on your goodness;—pardon me, I do not mean to insinuate that I think you a man capable of making an offer to raise the desponding hope of wretchedness, and then stealing away from your promise; remember also, that what I say is but a proposal, and that you are at liberty to come into it, or to crush it, as you please, for I am prepared to meet the worst that can befall me with fortitude;—the only terms on which I can receive life at your hands are, that you remove me from Italy."—"Name," I returned, "where you wish to be placed."—"I should prefer," she replied, "to live in England; the people there are generous and compassionate—encouragers of the industrious: I think I should there be the best able to turn the little talents I possess to advantage for procuring me an honest and humble maintenance."—"You shall go to England," I answered. "Jesus bless you!" she returned. "When will you be able to set out?" I asked. "If I consult my health," said she, "I cannot set out too soon; for be assured it will not mend while I remain in this hated country."—"I have seen enough of Italy," I replied; "and shall be ready to set out whenever you are competent to undertake the journey."—"One more petition," she rejoined. "I have to urge: do not think I impose on your goodness; indeed I do not: if you knew my unhappy situation, you would be convinced that I do not." She paused, and I requested her to speak without reserve.

serve : she then said, " We must not journey through Italy ; if we travel through this country, it is more than possible that all your kind endeavours for my future peace may be frustrated in one moment, and the rest of my days doomed to heart-rending torments."—" What route," I asked, " do you propose for us to make our road to England ?"—" There are vessels continually passing between Civita Vecchia and Nice ; have you any objection to our taking our passage in one of these ?" I instantly determined that there could be no hesitation in preferring a route of safety to this unfortunate woman, rather than indulging myself in once more crossing the Alps ; I accordingly agreed that our route should be the one she had desired it to be, and shortly after left her overwhelmed with gratitude ; having first promised her to send a person forward to Civita Vecchia to-morrow, to enquire when the first vessel bound to Nice would leave that port.

Evening.

My enquiries after a vessel this morning having got abroad in this place, they have very unexpectedly brought to me the captain of one who is in the trade between Civita Vecchia and Nice, and who informs me that he is to sail for Nice to-morrow evening, if the wind permits. I went to the Marchesa, and asked her if she could so soon venture to undertake the voyage. I should not have asked her the question, owing to her weak state of health, if I had not been assured that no other vessel would sail in three weeks at least.—She earnestly pressed that we should embark in the one that now offered : I have accordingly taken our passage therein, and we are set out with the captain for Civita Vecchia early to-morrow morning. I wonder, Seymour, what is now your opinion.

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nion of my conduct; whether or not you censure me for this philanthropic action. Perhaps before you determine upon the propriety of what I have done, you want to know how I intend to dispose of the Marchese when I get to England: not to let her toil for a subsistence, as she has herself asserted that she will, while I have superfluity, depend upon it, George. I have not yet told her my intention, but I shall make her the tenant of a neat cottage which I have lately built at the extremity of my park; here she shall enjoy the comforts and conveniences of life, which, with my slender knowledge of human nature, I am convinced, must be the happiest state that can be tasted by one who has experienced only misfortune in a higher sphere of life.

Do not write to me any more till I arrive in England, as I cannot name any place where I could be certain of receiving your letters. I shall now soon see Margaretta; with what exstasy I anticipate our meeting! Yes, George, I speak from my heart; for be assured, that however you may judge of me, the interest which I now feel in the fate of the unhappy Marchesa is of a nature very different to love. Farewel; as soon as I land in England I will write to you; till when and ever, believe me, with unfeigned regard, your true friend,

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER XXXIII.

Sir Charles Melford, to Major Seymour.

DEAR GEORGE,

Dover.

ONCE more arrived in England, I immediately fulfil my promise of announcing to you my return

turn to the land which gave me birth; and, believe me, I return to prefer Britain to any soil on which I have yet trodden; but, in truth, my friend, mine is only the preference of renewed habit; for I am not one of those selfish or unenlightened patriots, call them which you please, who suppose that God has been so unjust, as to place benefits in any one country, which he has not balanced by some equal good in every other.

Our journey has throughout been prosperous, and the Marchesa has displayed a cultivation of mind which has rendered her a most pleasant companion; in addition to this, her attentions to me, and her endeavours to promote whatever she believed to be my wish, have been so flattering, yet regulated by that extreme modesty which she always outwardly wore while I knew her in Venice, that I have accepted with pleasure her delicate offerings of gratitude, convinced that to be paid so unremittingly as she bestows them, they must proceed from a heart whose increasing happiness will not suffer it for a moment to forget its benefactor.

I have learned nothing more of the strange fate in which she is involved, nor indeed have I often touched upon the subject, as I perceive it gives her much pain to dwell upon it. The longest discourse which I have had with her upon this topic was about a fortnight ago; she then began it herself by saying, "Did I not once tell you that I had one friend in the pallazzo di Marvaldi?"—"You did," I replied. "I will inform you who that friend is," she returned; "it is the worthy old Bernardo, the major domo of the Marchese; he lived with my father, and still knows how to value the child of his lost master."—"Does he know where you are now?" I asked. "This was what I was going to tell you," she replied;

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"I have informed him that I am on my journey to England, and have promised, as soon as I arrive there, to instruct him where to address me; thus if any event which—" She paused a moment; then continued, "I only wished to account to you for my receiving and answering letters: are you satisfied with this explanation?"—"I can have no right," I returned, "to be dissatisfied with any part of your conduct; I am not your governor, though I am your protector."—"Pardon me," said she, "I think you wrong; it strikes me to be of the more consequence than you seem to imagine, that a man of your worth should be convinced that the woman he protects is free from dissolute principles."—"You addressed me," I returned, "as if you feared that I suspected the integrity of your heart."—"No," answered she; "I only speak from the determination I feel that you never shall have cause to doubt it." She immediately, on having said this, changed the subject, and we have not since conversed upon it.—Every word she utters, every action of her life, convinces me more strongly that she has been greatly unfortunate, but never unprincipled.

I have informed the Marchesa of the situation in which I intend to place her: she tells me, that she receives my offer of the plan I have formed for her future life as an additional weight upon the debt of gratitude which she already owes me, and shall never be able to discharge; but entreats that I would rather put her into some method of exercising her talents for music, embroidery, and painting, which shall make her dependence rest on her own endeavours. To silence her scruples for the present, I have told her, that she must, at least, inhabit my cottage, till some other plan of life for her can be properly digested.

When

When I first knew her, she was superficially acquainted with the English language, and much of my time during our journey has been passed in giving her a better knowledge of it.

I think there can be no impropriety in my introducing her to Margaretta; however this is a point on which I may not be so competent to decide as an indifferent person; I shall, therefore, come to no determination upon this subject till I have your advice.

Adieu: formal congratulations upon your marriage would not appear like the wishes of a friend; that you may enjoy all the happiness you can desire, will give true pleasure to, yours sincerely,

CHARLES MELFORD.

You may now direct for me at Melford-house.

LETTER XXXIV.

George Seymour, Esq. to Sir Charles Melford.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Kirton.

THE moment I know where to address you I take up my pen, but now I have dipped it into ink, I can hardly determine what more to say to you, than to congratulate you upon your return to your native country. You with me, I dare say to comment upon your conduct with regard to the Marchesa, and to offer you all the conjectures which may have occurred to me relative to the mystery in which she is wrapt. When an event has once taken place, it is folly to bring arguments to prove that it had better have been left undone; I shall, therefore, confine myself to observations upon

upon the fact as it now stands. Your humanity, you say, has induced you to take upon you the protection of an unfortunate woman, and to bring her with you to England; beware that passion is not cheating you under the garb of humanity.— You have placed her in a situation of independence contrary to her wishes of resting for her support upon her own endeavours; be careful, whatever you may of your own accord choose to bestow on her, that you are not too ready in granting requests urged by her; for women possessed of art, and placed in the situation in which you have fixed the Marchesa, have been known to transfer the dependence from themselves to those who were once their benefactors. I do not say that the Marchesa is one of those; but remember that you are not convinced any more than myself that she is not. You have seen that she is capable of assuming two different conducts; and however well disposed her own heart might at that time be, and however she might be constrained to act as she then did, deceit is a very unsafe lesson for the female mind to be practised in, upon whatever terms it may have been learnt and exercised. No woman but a wife should know the extent of her power over any individual man. It is allowable for every woman to have some little harmless vanity, and I know no means so likely to convert that vanity into a crime, as her having once learnt that she possesses dominion over one of the lords of the creation. The vanity of woman is fed by the weakness of man; it is in his ability to restrain her vanity within the bounds of good humour to others, and harmless approbation of herself, or to suffer it to extend into criminality.

You ask me whether you shall introduce Margareta to the acquaintance of the Marchesa?— I have heard it as the opinion of a man to whose
sentiments

sentiments I pay much deference, that the mind is improved by holding conversation with a repentant sinner; I allow this to be a truth; but I feel it to be a much stronger truth, that the mind of innocence is most safe in the conversation of a heart which has never needed repentance; I, therefore, advise you not to let Margareta know the Marchesa, at least for some months to come, till you have ascertained how she will regulate her conduct in her new abode. Her new abode must be that of seclusion; solitude is the touchstone of most hearts; where there is least to divert the thoughts, the passions are often most truant; make the experiment; do not put it into the power of accident to acquaint the pureness of Margareta's heart that criminality exists. I have written all I have to say upon this subject, and if ever you valued my advice, let me entreat you to attend to my present admonitions.

I intended to have visited you immediately on your return to England, but the ill health of Mrs. Hughford makes me unwilling to leave Emma alone with her, lest any thing fatal should occur in my absence; I have, therefore, a request to make to you in the names of Emma and myself; it is, that as soon as your inclination and leisure will permit you, you will come and pass some time with us at Kirton.

I have sold my majority, and am now, according to the appellation by which I am known in the village, no longer Major, but 'Squire Seymour.

Instead of a letter let the next intelligence I receive from you be from your own lips. Farewel: and believe me truly yours,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

LETTER

LETTER XXXV.

Sir Charles Melford to George Seymour, Esq.

Melford-house

OH, George, how exquisitely has Margaretta ripened into the perfections of person and mind since I last saw her! Let it not be said that the human mind, with the materials for instruction put into its own hands, is capable of expanding its faculties, or that the person may not in an obscure hamlet acquire graces superior to those of studied art. Could you see the easy unaffected elegance with which Margaretta moves, feel the force of her eyes and smiles untutored in the fictitious modes of gaining approbation, you would then be convinced how much more attractive are the graces of innocence than those of any studied system. Till you see her, this is all you can know of her person, and you may conceive the description of it flattered by one feeling so warmly in her cause as myself; but of the accomplishments of her mind I can give you evidence on paper. On my first visit to her at Edward Wallace's farm, after the usual sentences of satisfaction at again meeting had passed between us, I began to question her about her improvements, in my absence, with all the warmth that a master in love usually catechises his pupil. her answers to my enquiries evinced that she had not only been attentive to the course of reading I had advised, but had drawn comments from it to the benefit of her understanding. Uninstructed but by natural genius, she informed me that she had used the pencil, and begged me to view with an eye of candour sketches from nature which criticism must have

approved. I asked her whether the sister art of the pencil had never been courted by her?—a faint blush suffused her cheek, and she replied, “that she had sometimes attempted to write some little pieces of poetry.” I requested to see them: and with a modesty far more interesting than the affected timidity of those who take much entreaty to show their performances to the eye of a friend, and vainly believe that they are enhancing the merit of their works by being backward in showing them, she immediately produced to me some sheets of paper on which she had transcribed the effusions of her uncultivated genius: from among them I have selected the following to send to you.

SONNET.—To A SNOWDROP.

Hail, thou chaste snowdrop! first of simple flow'rs
That Nature sends to deck her vernal bow'rs;
May by thy side no spiteful weed o'er-grow
That modest beauty thy full growth will show!
For thy fair emblem in the human heart,
Mild innocence, too often feels a dart
Shot from a bosom envious of its worth,
That sours its sweets and stabs it in its birth:
Too often thus is Virtue crush'd by man,
Heedless the bliss which Virtue gives, to scan.
Oh, may'st thou flourish in thine humbler sphere,
Not knowing cause thy neighbour's hate to fear!
Thus shall I wish thy passive life my own,
To bud unenvy'd, though I flow'r unknown.

The following lines were suggested to Margaretta by the recollection of what she suffered on hearing the passing bell toll for her father's death.

SONNET.—To DEATH.

Oh, the sad sound of yonder passing bell!
How woe-clogg'd through the air its knock rebound!
Why, thou grim tyrant of our earthly fate,
Why hast thou thought that iron mauls to wound—

Tanght

To

requires that I should now be active in many concerns where the observation of a principal is required. My steward is a very worthy man; but the most honest should not have too much latitude of power given to them; by allowing it to them, we are not only hazarding the injury of our own property, but also of their integrity; for we are, perhaps, inducing them into evil which they never would have imagined if we had not left temptation to it in their way.

Remember me respectfully to your wife, and believe me your sincere friend,

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER XXXVI.

George Seymour, Esq. to Sir Charles Melford.

Kirton.

MANY thanks, my dear Charles, for the specimens which you sent to us of your Margareta's natural powers; I say to *us*, for I am a sufficiently unfashionable husband to divide all my pleasures with my wife, and Emma follows my example, by taking an interest in all mine, and admitting me to a share in all hers. The verses to which I allude proved a most acceptable present to my Emma; for she has herself a taste for scribbling, though an uncultivated one, and has expressed much satisfaction that one whom she hopes in a short time to call her friend has a similar inclination to herself. As a proof that she wishes to court the friendship of Margareta, she desires her to accept, in return for her compositions, a couple of little pieces which she has just written. She does not send them because she has the vanity to
imagine

imagine them to be perfect ; she knows them to be far otherwise ; but sends them to convince the future wife of my friend, that she wishes to meet her upon those terms of amicable intercourse which do not admit the concealing from one friend whatever in its performance has given pleasure to the other. Emma's acquaintance hereabouts knows her to be what the world chooses to call a poetess ; that is, a woman who sometimes writes her thoughts in verse. Some are candid enough to allow that she has a little merit ; others laugh at her, because she cultivates a talent which they have not. Some again, the slaves of envy, vouchsafe only a sneer when her little works are mentioned ; and others most richly display their own ignorance in attempting to criticise her writings. Emma herself, with too much good sense to refrain from an amusement that gives no one individual but the envious pain, is still too diffident not to believe that her writings are of the lowest rank, and so good-natured as to be unoffended with slander, and even think her a true speaker. Her husband were he to give his opinion of the thoughts which issue from a heart united by the most tender ties to his own, would perhaps give it too partially : this is all he ever ventures to say upon the subject, " If my Emma fails in her innocent attempts, she still does more to merit praise than those who attempt nothing ;" and he adds, " that he thinks those who have never made the attempt, would do wisely for themselves to refrain from censuring a task of whose difficulty they cannot have the ability of judging ; and that these who have performed the like task with success, would do equally right to encourage others who are mounting the hill of difficulty, which they have already climbed, lest, while they pretend to despise, they prove themselves in reality

ality apprehensive of a growing rival." These remarks, which, though true, I can only venture to make to the ear of a proved friend, as their general circulation would at least beget me a coolness, if not a quarrel, with most of those who call themselves both mine and my wife's *very good friends*.

I have given you a long preface, the subject itself shall now immediately follow.

ART'S PETITION TO NATURE.

Art having once a gift to make,

Submissive bow'd at Nature's shrine ;

" Let envy now each breast forsake,

" Thy pow'r," she said, " I own divine.

" Then hear my pray'r, and grant thy aid,

" Bless with thy smile my arduous task ;

" Touch with thy wand the gift I've made,

" This fairy boon is all I ask.

" Of roses, jes'mines, lillies meek,

" Of ev'ry sweet thy bow'rs can boast

" (Design'd to raise on Friendship's cheek,

" The blush whose silence pleases most).

" A gift I've made ; thy stores unclose,

" Shed fragrance o'er the myrtle green,

" Spangle with dew the blushing rose,

" Breathe beauty on the pink serene :

" The tint of early morn bestow

" On the carnation's glowing face,

" The humble cornflow'rs claim is, too,

" That hues celestial should it grace.

" My pray'r is made ; smile from thy throne,

" And drive me not to sad despair ;

" Force not my heaving breast to own

" That sorrow fits triumphant there."

Benignant Nature smil'd serene,

Complaisant smil'd at Art's behest,

An

And gave her sister's flow'rs a mien
That more than answer'd her request.

Delighted Art with rapture flew,
And plac'd them safe on Friendship's shrine;
Friendship entranc'd can only view,
And hug the gift so all divine:

Lost are her words, in pleasure lost,
Her thoughts too quick to give them breath;
She *looks* her thanks for kindness past,
To be forgotten but in death!

The following lines were written one stormy evening, when the loud whistling of the wind round the antique mansion of Mrs. Hughford had led Emma to reflect upon the dreadful and precarious fate of those at sea.

THE SAILOR.

Sunk beneath the foaming surge
Lies poor Edwin's senseless corse;
Sea-gulls skimming sing his dirge,
Friends on shore lament his loss!

Hurl'd from off the ship's high side
By the scourging tempest's rod,
Doom'd on angry waves to ride,
Cast on the mercy of his God:

Behold his form! his flowing hair
Is dripping with a briny flood;
His eyes are fix'd in wan despair,
Death does his aching heart forbode:

Deny'd his wife's last kiss to feel,
Refus'd his lisping blest;
No death-bell his sad fate will tell,
No shroud his sea-beat corpse will dress!

He sinks! he dies! the last hard pang,
That link'd his soul so long to earth,
Is past! his flitting ghoſt has ſung,
"The boon of virtue now has birth,"

Oh,

Oh, heave a sigh to Edwin's name!
 Oh, give a tear to errors past!
 Merit *must* own the first, and Fame
 And Pity *shall* blot out the last.

Then sleep in peace; thy children's fate
 Rests in the hands of him whose love
 Feels for the orphan's helpless state—
 Feels, and *protects* them from above.*

I expect that the same letter which tells me you have shewed these lines to Margaretta, as the productions of one who hopes soon to call her friend, will also bring me information that you have disclosed your heart to her, and let her into the secret of what the happy character is in which Mrs. Seymour and myself are to be introduced to her. Truly, Charles, I think you have been very dilatory in bringing to a conclusion this affair which you profess so strongly to interest your heart: once more, I say, do not trifle with such perfect felicity as awaits you; when any point is once determined to be desirable, all delays in its completion are dangerous, especially one where the heart is concerned: reflect and be wise and happy.—
 Adieu! Yours truly,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

LETTER XXXVII.

Sir Charles Melford to George Seymour, Esq.

Melford-house.

OH, George, I am thrown into a dilemma in which I know not how to act, or on what to decide

* For, 'Art's Petition to Nature,' and 'The Sailor,' the author is indebted to the pen of a female friend.

cide !—I have lost Margaretta.—Hear me with patience, feel for me, pity me, although you exclaim, “The blame lies with himself !”

It is now six weeks since I have written to you ; two months have I been returned to England, and ever since the receipt of your last letter I have let no opportunity slip of endeavouring to prepare Margaretta for the full confession of my heart. I have watched her countenance when I have given the tinge of love to sentences which were before confined to the warmth of friendship ; my words have produced no emotions that betrayed she understood their concealed meaning ; she received them only as expressions of benevolence delivered in new terms. Her heart is totally unsuspecting that it has touched mine with any passion but that of humanity. Oh, why did I not sooner teach her that it vibrated on the chords of love ! I have made a discovery which——but I will proceed regularly.

Edward Wallace was the friend of my boyish days ; he has now been the companion of my walks about my lands. My evenings I pass sometimes at Edward Wallace’s farm, for the sake of enjoying the society of Margaretta ; sometimes in visits of friendship to the Marchesa, whose conduct still continues to be highly exemplary ; and accidentally, after a day of any country sport, Edward spends the evening with me at Melford-house. This was yesterday the case ; I returned to a late dinner, of which I invited Edward to partake. When the cloth was removed, the wine put on the table, and we were left to ourselves, I felt—I know not why, particularly then ; perhaps it was that I had been more than usually fatigued by the exercise of the day : however, no matter why—but I felt inclined to drink a few bumpers very rapidly one after another. In almost every

every one of them I toasted Margaretta, and called upon the young farmer to join me ; he drank a much less quantity than myself, but repeated my toast every time I gave it with all the energy I pronounced it myself. I had long intended to take some opportunity of giving Edward Wallace a hint of my intention with regard to Margaretta, and to ask him whether he imagined that she had ever suspected that I entertained for her any warmer passion than that of friendship. The wine quickened my feelings ; my spirits rested solely upon my love for Margaretta, and I determined to make this the moment I had been some time looking for : " Edward," I said, you live under the same roof with Margaretta ; you have an opportunity of observing her in every action of her daily life ; those are the moments that best bespeak the temper of the mind, and I trust you ever find in her most trivial action something to praise."—" Do not," he answered, " think me too partial or blindly prejudiced in her favour, if I declare that I see in her all perfectness."—" I shall not think you improperly biassed," replied I, smiling, " for entertaining an opinion which is my own."—" You do Margaretta great honour," said Edward. " To confer justice," I returned, " is not to confer honour, though it is highly honourable to the individual on whom it is conferred to deserve it : justice is the right of all. Unhappily such is the envious temper of the world, that, as far as words can convey it, their duty is much oftener given to the undeserving than the meritorious."—" You, Sir Charles," he replied, " have bestowed on Margaretta the justice of humanity ; you have performed towards her that great claim of benevolence which is exacted from man to his fellow. Margaretta is worthy the friendship you have shewn to her : she feels with gratitude the debt

debt she owes to you, and prays with fervour for the means of repaying it." He spoke these words with an emotion which I conceived to proceed only from that interest in her favour which, judging by my own heart, I thought no one who knew Margaretta could fail to feel for her, and I answered, "I am already repaid by seeing those exquisite talents which she possesses cultivated by her into ornaments of society, and which, if I had neglected to point out to her that she did possess them, might have died away unknown. I have, by one action, snatched an individual from misery, perhaps from oblivion; and conferred a portion of happiness upon the world, even if it is felt by no one but myself."—"Indeed," he said, "it is not a partial happiness; all who know the source from whence it springs, must feel its charming influence."—"You speak enthusiastically of my protégée," I cried. "True, Sir Charles," replied Wallace; "I am an enthusiast in the praise of Margaretta Hayton."—"You have not known her long," I returned, "and yet, in the time you have been acquainted with her, you find that she has possessed the secret of inspiring you both with friendship and esteem for her."—"Indeed she has," he answered with emphasis. "How heavenly a prize," I rejoined, "must be the love of a woman, whose friendship and esteem carry with them such influence over the hearts of those on whom they are bestowed!" Edward Wallace breathed a half-raised sigh. I emptied a glass, which I had been sometimes holding to my lips, then said, "He must indeed, be the happiest fellow in existence who calls Margaretta wife." As I spoke these words I fixed my eyes upon Edward; his eyes for a moment met mine, and a crimson blush stole over his face. He attempted to speak, hesitated, then turned away his eyes, and the glow
on

on his cheeks became still deeper. His confusion raised within me an agony which made me tremble. I felt that I had something to fear relative to Margaretta; I could not decide what, my ideas were perplexed, and my tongue was unable to move. In a few moments Edward Wallace again turned his eyes towards me, his confusion was much abated, and there remained only sufficient blood in his face to give an animation to his eye. "Sir Charles," he said, "I perceive that you are acquainted with the feelings of my heart; it was not my intention to keep them a secret to you any longer than till an opportunity presented itself to me of disclosing them to you." I did not yet entirely understand his meaning; if I had, I could not have answered him. He continued: "It is the proudest wish of my heart to become that enviable being who shall call Margaritta his own; you have been friend and father both to Margaretta and to myself, we both owe you a debt of gratitude, which our hearts and affections alone can cancel, and yet we petition one more blessing from him who has——" Whilst he was speaking these words a feint sickness seized my whole frame, and my head became dizzy and painful. I attempted to reach the decanter, my strength was insufficient, my head fell upon a wine glass near the edge of the table, the glass broke under the blow it had received, and cut my temple; the blood gushed violently from the wound; Edward started from his chair, raised me from the table, and, while he supported me in his arms, called to the servants for assistance. The blood trickled down my face, my sensation of mental agony increased; a hot air seemed to be choking my throat, and a mist obscuring my eyes; an icy coldness then came over my whole frame, and I fainted.

When

When sensation returned I found myself upon the outside of my own bed, the village apothecary, who had just dressed my wound, standing on one side of the bed, and Edward Wallace leaning upon the other, and applying vinegar to my nostrils. Recollection did not immediately return with life; I had no remembrance of the past till I saw Edward; then the torments of memory burst upon me; from a shivering coldness my blood became a raging fever, and the agonies of my heart distilled themselves in large drops of perspiration from every pore of my aching body. I raised myself upon the bed, and laid my hand upon my forehead; when my eyes glanced towards Edward, he said, I hope you are better." I shook my head, but could not immediately speak: a few moments after I answered, "Edward, you call yourself my friend; you are my friend; I acknowledge you my friend." I extended my hand towards him; he took it in his; I pressed his fingers in mine, then added, "I conjure you by our friendship to leave me, I shall perhaps be better when you are gone." Having said this, I withdrew my hand, and placed it before my eyes. Whether Edward thought my senses affected by the blow I had received I know not; but when I again looked round I found that he was sitting on a chair by the bed-side, where he was almost hid from my observation by the curtain. I could not look upon him with composure—I could not command my feelings. "Pray, leave me, Edward," I said, "it is cruel of you not to go when I desire you." He rose and left the room, saying, "I would do any thing to oblige you." All that I audibly answered to this declaration was a sigh; mentally I exclaimed, "How little do you know what I desire!" I sunk down upon the bed.

The

The apothecary recommended that I should undress myself and go into bed. My faintness was by him, and by those who had attended me, thought to be in consequence of my loss of blood, I did not contradict their opinion, but suffered myself to be put to bed, and endeavoured to lie as composed as my perturbed state of mind would permit me.

The apothecary administered a cordial; it warmed my heart and refreshed me; my strength began in some small degree to return; but, alas! to what purpose did it return! to give a keener edge to the smart that rankled in my breast.

In a short time the apothecary left me: he told me, that as the wound had bled copiously, nothing was to be apprehended from it. He advised me, if possible, to sleep: I felt myself that it was *impossible*, and only answered by an inclination of my head. I endeavoured to compose my mind, I endeavoured to reason with myself, but in vain; my mind was tortured, agonized, and the more I reflected the more miserable appeared my situation.

Oh, good God, Seymour, conceive what I must have felt at hearing another man declare that he had gained the heart of Margareta!—won the affections of that Margareta whom I had protected, whom I had cherished, whom I had adopted, whom I had educated, and to whom I had looked forward as the smiling angel from whom all my earthly bliss was henceforward to be derived; and then—oh, maddening thought!—to reflect that I had lost her because I had neglected to tell her how dear she was to my heart, how deeply engraven on my soul!

Thus ran my thoughts—I know not how long—till a gentle rap at my chamber door called my
servant,

servant, who was sitting by my bedside, to open it. I heard the voice of Mrs. Wallace enquiring "if I was asleep?" on being told that I was not, she requested permission to see me; I motioned to John to admit her, and when she was come in he left the chamber.

Mrs. Wallace approached the bed; I pointed to a chair, and she placed herself upon it. "How do you do now, sir?" she said; her voice showed me that she had been alarmed. "Not well," I answered; "not well, indeed."—"Is your temple very painful?" she next asked. I had forgot the wounds in my head, and did not recollect what she meant till I put up my hand to my forehead and felt the bandage that encircled it. "Is it very painful?" she repeated; "I am afraid it is."—"Not at all," I answered. She looked at me as if she doubted the truth of what I had said, or rather as if she doubted the competency of my ability for informing her. A pause ensued. "How were you taken, Sir Charles?" she broke silence by saying; "did you turn faint, or were you dosing?"—"Oh, no," exclaimed I; "wide awake, I assure you."—"You were faint then; something had disagreed with you," she returned. "You are right," I replied, "you are right."—"If you had been sick," she again began, "it had been fortunate, it would have kept your head from turning dizzy."—"I was sick, sick at heart," I cried with violence. "I did not understand so," said Mrs. Wallace. I turned my face towards the pillow, and again silence ensued. "Have you taken any thing since you were put to bed?" Mrs. Wallace presently demanded. "Yes, "I have."—"Do you wish for any thing now?"—"No."—"Tell me when you do," she answered; "I am come to watch by you to-night."—"You, Mrs. Wallace!"—"You must allow me to be your nurse; I cannot

not

not think of leaving you till I see you better." I began to remonstrate upon an attendance which I knew to be unnecessary, and yet could not summon fortitude to explain why it was so. "Indeed, Sir Charles," she answered, "I must force myself as a nurse upon you; I shall never be forgiven if I go home and leave you: if you will not accept of my services for your own sake, let me stay for the peace of Margaretta; she will be more miserable than I can describe if I am not with you."—"Is Margaretta indeed miserable on my account? Does she indeed feel thus tenderly for me?" I exclaimed. "Surely, Sir Charles," replied Mrs. Wallace, "you cannot doubt it; have you not been every thing to her, while she has only the gratitude of her heart to return you?"—"Margaretta is an angel," I said, in a voice scarcely audible. Mrs. Wallace, however, heard what I did say; for she answered, "I hope her prayers will restore you, for you have them sincerely."

Oh, Seymour, what an agony was I undergoing to hear that Margaretta revered me, wept for me, prayed for me, and yet *loved* another! I was no longer master of my feelings, the quickness of sense out-stepped reason, and I cried, "Can this be true, and can it also be true that she does not now"—"love me?" I would have added, but still contending sensations seemed to advise that I should keep the secret locked in my own breast. Mrs. Wallace imagined that she had understood how I intended to finish my sentence; for she said, "You mean, sir, that she does not now come to visit you; indeed she was very earnest in her entreaties to see you to-night; but I persuaded her not to come till the morning."—"Dear, generous girl!" I exclaimed; "send one of my servants directly to let her know that

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I am.

I am much, much better."—"My son, sir," she answered, "is waiting here to carry Margarett's tidings of your health."—"Oh, God!" inadvertently escaped my lips, and again my hand was placed on my aching head. Mrs. Wallace rose and stood by the bedside: "You are *not* better, Sir Charles," she said. "I am ill at ease," I replied. "Pray, Sir Charles," she said, in emotion, "has my son Edward offended you?" I sighed, but did not answer. "I entreat you, Sir Charles, to tell me if he has." Mrs. Wallace went on: "He told me that he feared, by your sending him away from you, that he had unwillingly disobliged you; if he has done so, pray admit him to your chamber, if it be but for a minute, that he may learn in what he has acted contrary to your wish, and atone for his fault; he is very unhappy at the idea of having offended you." The tears were starting into her eyes as she spoke these words; they challenged mine; I endeavoured to speak, but my utterance was choked. Mrs. Wallace continued, "Edward would have died sooner than have offended his benefactor!" Her anxiety at the charge of ingratitude, which, I believe, she feared I might be feeling against her son, could no longer be restrained, and she burst out into sobs of grief. I could not bear to see the effect of my own pain falling in torture upon the heart of another. I raised up myself hastily in the bed, caught the hand of Mrs. Wallace, nipped it in mine, and said, "Mrs. Wallace, will you believe what I shall say?"—"Certainly, certainly I shall," she answered through her tears. "Upon my honour, then," I replied, "your son has not offended me in word or action; I spoke harshly to him, I could not help it; but I was not angry with him, I was impassioned against my own feelings;

ings ; but I called him friend even in the fervour of my feelings ; I conjured him by our friendship to leave my chamber. Pray, go to him now—go immediately, good Mrs. Wallace, and tell him, that in the same name of friend I entreat him to pardon the severity with which I spoke to him !” Mrs. Wallace would not suffer me to proceed : her tears now flowed faster than they had done before, though from different sensations, and in indistinct sentences said, “ No, Sir Charles, no, no, this humiliation must not be ; you must not ask the pardon of my poor boy ; he would be more hurt by your submission than when he thought you were displeased with him. No, no, I cannot, will not go to him, much as I know he desires to hear that he has not offended you.” —“ I must send another messenger to him then,” said I, for I cannot live under the idea of having given pain to one whom I esteem.” Mrs. Wallace wiped the tears from her eyes, then rejoined, “ Might Edward—would you allow Edward the satisfaction of coming for a moment into your chamber, and just shaking you by the hand, in order to convince him that you are not displeased with him ?” Again a sigh, and only a deep sigh, escaped me in answer to her request. I did not know how to support the presence of the man who had won the love of Margaretta, and I felt as much hurt to refuse seeing Edward, when it was the petition of his weeping mother that I should see him. “ May I call him in ?” asked Mrs. Wallace. I uttered a faint “ Yes.” She left the room. I again felt sick and faint ; but I resolved to muster strength to support the short interview. I put my hand on the outside of the bed ; I was uncertain whether I could command sufficient fortitude in order to draw it out in order to put it into the hand of the man who had won

the heart of Margaretta, when he stood before me. Edward entered, took the hand I had prepared for him, pressed it in his, and said, "Am I forgiven, Sir Charles?"—"Indeed," I answered, you have never offended me, you were mistaken: I beg your pardon for having given you a momentary feeling the reverse of happiness; but I cannot talk now, you must leave me."—"Let me sit by your bedside to-night," he replied. "On no account," I returned. "Are you better?" he next asked. "The wound in my head is much better," I answered, "I am sincerely glad of it," he cried; and since you will not permit me to be your companion, I will go home with the happy tidings of your amendment to Margaretta: good night, and may you be still better in the morning." He left the room, I thought Mrs. Wallace had gone out with him, and, imagining myself alone, I gave vent to my feelings, and exclaimed, "My heart will break before that period arrives!" As I concluded these words I raised my eyes towards the foot of the bed, and saw Mrs. Wallace standing before it, and listening in astonishment to what I had said. She came round to the side of the bed: "For Heaven's sake, sir," she cried, "what afflicts you? some heavy sorrow is labouring in your heart. Excuse my being so free as to tell you so; but from the first moment of my seeing you, I thought your eyes looked more like those of a person whose peace was disturbed than his health." I suffered a few moments to pass in silence, then said, "Mrs. Wallace, if I confide to you that my case is such as you imagine it to be, have you sufficient discretion to bind it down a secret to your own breast?"—"Certainly, sir, if you command me," she answered. "Enough," I replied, "your word is pledged to me: what the anxiety

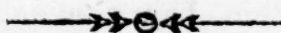
is that is preying upon my mind I am not now going to impart to you; in time you will know it. Be assured that it is nothing which interferes with your own happiness. You now perceive that I want no nurse during the night; leave me, therefore, but do not leave the house to-night, as your return now might surprise your son and Margaretta. I dare say my mind will be easier by the morning; for I then shall have determined upon some points on which I am now undecided. Good-night, good Mrs. Wallace; order a bed to be provided for yourself, and send my servant to me." Having said this, I endeavoured to lay myself down with composure in my bed. "If you choose I should leave you—" returned Mrs. Wallace, and made a considerable pause after she had spoken the words; which, as I did not interrupt, she added, "Good-night, Sir Charles, and pray God make you better and happier." She then went out of the chamber with the slow step of doubt and anxiety.

When John came to my chamber, the apothecary came with him, and after my wound had been dressed, I sent my servant down to give orders that I should not be interrupted any more that night. On his return I had my door locked, rose and dressed myself: I felt faint, but more harassed in mind than in body. My writing-desk was then placed before me, and I ordered John to go to bed in the closet.

I have now been writing nearly four hours, and have, as far as the making our sorrows known to a friend can relieve the heart, disencumbered mine of some small portion of the weight of grief with which it is loaded. I shall now return to bed, not to sleep, but to reflect upon a conduct which I am half resolved, and yet more than half afraid to adopt. Oh, Seymour! pity me; I am indeed
miserable,

miserable, although the fault lies with myself. Sweet are your slumbers; nothing interrupts your approaching sleep, but the heavings of a heart that beats only for you, as you recline your head on the bosom of an affectionate wife: my pillow is stuffed with thorns!—Once more I entreat you to pity the unfortunate,

CHARLES MELFORD.



LETTER XXXVIII.

Sir Charles Melford, in continuation.

SEYMOUR,

Melford-house.

IF ever a wretch breathed upon this earth, it is myself. It is now eleven o'clock in the morning, and I have not yet come to any resolution; I have a noble design in my head, but my heart still clings cowardly to the interest of the frame it inhabits, and forms delays to its execution. Oh, what a night have I passed! how trivial are the sufferings of bodily pain, when compared with the tortures of the mind. Methinks the very rendings of the rack might be tamely borne by one who had felt the conflict now raging in my heart; and then, as if the cause itself of my sufferings were not enough for one mortal to bear, I have the additional, the bitter sting of self-reproach, for not having so regulated my conduct as to have prevented the misery which has now befallen me.

With what acuteness do the justice of your admonitions, the truth of your advice, the friendship of your counsels, now strike upon my heart! Oh, Seymour! I cannot forbear asking myself whether retributition may not sometimes overtake

take us on earth ? whether my present disappointment may not be my punishment for having wandered into the by-paths of pleasure with the Marchesa Laura, when the high-road to bliss lay open to me, through the heart of Margaretta ? the heart of Margaretta, which was then untouched by any passion but that of gratitude and friendship *for me* ! Oh, how exquisitely might those passions then have been converted into the tenderest sensations, with which the human breast can glow ! — Now — Oh, I cannot think — I cannot write —

Two more hours are passed, still my resolution falters. I have voluntarily promised myself a father to Margaretta, a friend to Edward Wallace. Is it the part of a father — is it the part of a friend, to disunite two worthy hearts joined by the sweetest ties ? — even — even though his own should break in making theirs inseparable ? — This is a selfish thought ; but it is so keen a one, that it will not be passed over in silence. I am fated to be unhappy ; for even if I could now make Margaretta mine, where would be the bliss that a man could enjoy in crushing the first love of an amiable pair, to gratify his own selfish desires ? Oh, no, this I can never do ; I can rather bear to be unhappy myself, than to make Margaretta so. Misery is then my doom ; but my obligation to confer justice is still the same ; and I will not add a crime towards another to the fault I have already committed towards my own heart : my mind is already too much burdened.

I have desired Mrs. Wallace to wait for a note, which I am going to write to Margaretta. I am faint, and ill. Great God ! grant me strength to execute my design, I will not then quarrel with feebleness of intellect, or body ; perhaps it may prove a friend to waken the acuteness of thought.

— Now

—Now is the time—my hand trembles, my head aches, every thing swims before my eyes. Why did I not attend to your admonitions? but it is past; and I will—be just! It is done—I have written to Margaretta; I could scarcely breathe before; I have wept since, and my mind is somewhat relieved by it. Mrs. Wallace has taken the letter; little does she suspect what it contains. I wish Margaretta had received it. I should be easier if I thought she had read it. Thought is very painful; I will endeavour to divert it by transcribing to you my letter to Margaretta; it ran thus:

“ Margaretta, the most arduous task of my life is that I this moment experience in writing to you; and yet how should I ere yesterday have ridiculed the idea of my feeling pain in addressing you! You have hitherto called me benefactor; you have poured forth from your generous bosom effusions of gratitude, which have made every service I could render you too little for the merits of your heart. You have called me also father; I have had from you all the reverence, the duty of a daughter, and I have endeavoured to repay to you all the obligations depending from a father to a child: never, never I entreat you cease to feel for me as for a father; it is the most solemn petition I shall ever urge to you. I have always found you so tenderly obedient, even to the very anticipation of my wishes, that I do not hesitate to decide—that my present request is already complied with by you; nay, I even believe I have done you injustice in the making of it, for I ought to have recollected that it was a law engraven on your excellent heart.—Now let me explain why I made it, and how I desire you should understand my petition. I wish you to feel for me *only* as
you

you would feel for a father ; I wish you to forget that there is any preponderancy of obligation on your part to me ; and from this moment I entreat you to consider whatever services may pass between us, as the mutual obligations between father and child. This is the prayer of him to whom Margaretta has so often said, ‘ Oh, that I could tell you all the gratitude my heart feels for you ! oh, that I could repay you, if but in part, the obligations I have received at your hands ! ’ The moment is now come at which I accept a requital from you, what that requital is, I have already pointed out to you ; do not turn ingrate, and refuse to make it to me.—

“ Margaretta has bound herself to the request of Sir Charles Melford, she is henceforward his daughter, and considers herself entitled to receive from him the services of a father —

“ This I venture to affirm to my own heart, confident of the desire which your’s possesses to acquiesce in any request of mine.

“ Now hear me : you have promised to obey me ; mark then what is the first command of your father, and attend to my instructions faithfully : go to Edward Wallace, tell him these words ; ‘ Edward, you have confided to my father our mutual affection ; he thinks you worthy of my hand and heart, and consents to give his blessing to our union.’ Then give him the notes which I have inclosed in this letter, their value is five thousand pounds ; tell him it is your dower ; request him from me, that your marriage may take place to-morrow morning. Pardon me, my dear daughter, that I cannot witness the solemnity, nor can I see either of you till it is performed ; when the indissoluble knot is tied, then come to me, you shall have my blessing, and the best congratulations my health will permit me to bestow. God

bless you! return me no answer, ask me no questions, only come to me the moment you are the wife of Edward Wallace; I cannot embrace you with the fervor of a father till you *are* his wife, Heaven bless you now, then, and ever! such is the prayer of your father,

CHARLES MELFORD.

Have I done right? I feel tolerably satisfied with my own conduct, and it has always been a rule with me, that a man's own conscience should be the touchstone on which to try the nature of his actions. This hasty marriage will spare pain both to them and myself. Edward will not know he ever had a rival, till he is convinced that he has nothing to fear from him. A double inclination will impel Margaretta to obey my instructions, and when she is once another's, perhaps the fever in my brain will cool. Margaretta another's! Oh, almighty powers, on how uncertain a wheel do all the accidents of this life revolve! Eight-and-forty hours ago I would have staked my life against the shadow of a possibility that Margaretta would have become any man's wife but my own.

. My letter has been gone nearly four hours. I receive no answer. Margaretta obeys me. Good-night to happiness, the dusky veil of sorrow is drawn over my future prospects. Yet, I wonder they were not surprised at the hastiness with which I asked their marriage to be solemnized. I wonder also that they should not think it strange that I should refuse to see them till they were become inseparable. Perhaps Margaretta sees a mystery in my letter, and is by that prevented from returning me an answer. I expect at least her thanks. I know I told her not to return me an answer, and therefore I ought not to expect one; but my mind is in a state not very consistent even

even with itself. Mrs. Wallace asks to see me ;
 I told my servant to tell her that I was fallen asleep.
 " She will wait then," she says, " till I wake, for
 she *must* see me to-night." I cannot refuse seeing
 her, as I find she is alone. In a few minutes I
 shall admit her into my chamber.

Twelve o'clock at night.

I HAVE not been able to write for some hours.
 The die of my fate is decidedly cast ; Margaretta
 becomes the wife of Edward Wallace : but I will
 proceed as composedly as I am able. When Mrs.
 Wallace came into my room, I was lying upon a
 sofa before the table at which I had been writing ;
 she approached me with her hands raised, and at-
 tempted to throw herself on her knees before me ;
 I prevented her, and placed her on the sofa by my
 side : it was a long time before she could command
 her utterance, and when she did speak, her words
 were so confused as to be almost unintelligible ; I
 gathered from her, however, that she was come
 commissioned to express to me the thanks of her
 son and Margaretta. I could not command my
 feelings sufficiently to keep upon my seat ; I rose
 and walked up and down the room while she was
 speaking, at intervals exclaiming, " Enough,
 enough, for Heaven's sake no more thanks." At
 length she ceased her strain of gratitude ; but I
 still continued traversing the room. She did not
 speak again until I resumed my seat ; she then said,
 " Sir Charles, you last night confessed to me that
 you had some secret cause of misery ; you said too,
 that in time I should know what it was."—" I did,
 but I now sincerely hope that you never will," I
 exclaimed, interrupting her. She looked at me
 steadfastly ; but did not answer me. " Indeed,"
 I continued, " it is dissipating fast, and I trust, will
 soon

soon be quite worn away.”—“Your looks and words disagree,” said Mrs. Wallace; “your features are more care-worn to-day even than they were last night.”—“Oh, no,” I answered.—“Indeed they are,” she returned; “and I think I know the cause.”—“Surely you cannot,” I cried, thrown a little off my guard by her declaration. “Nay,” she replied, “it was Margaretta’s first suspicion; but I think her right in it, and so does Edward.”—“What does Margaretta say?” asked I, trembling. “She says, Sir Charles,”—Mrs. Wallace went on, “that she fears you have been crossed in love, and that on this account—” This was a happy mistake, and I immediately interrupted her by saying, “Margaretta is right, I have been crossed in love; and this is the reason why I could not bear your son’s presence, at the moment that he told me that he was a favoured lover; this is the reason that I cannot witness Edward’s marriage with Margaretta; this is also the reason why I wish to be so hasty, because I hope I shall feel nothing when they are once united.”—“You are too good a man to have met with such a disappointment,” returned Mrs. Wallace; “indeed it was the opinion of us all that this was the case; your letter to Margaretta, though filled with the kindness of an angel, shows your mind to be ill at ease; and, moreover, she thought there must be some very pressing reason for your wishing Edward and she to be married at so short a notice, as to-morrow morning; but she bade me inform you that all scruples vanish, where the peace of your mind is concerned; and she also desired me to say, that she hopes you have not felt yourself slighted by her, in her not having told you herself that Edward had gained her heart; but that she had only given her consent to be his in a few days, and intended to have informed you
of

of it the very first opportunity." Again I rose and traversed the room. "This is a subject upon which we must talk no more; I hope after to-morrow you will be better," said Mrs. Wallace. "If my feelings undergo any change, it must be for the better," I returned. "Will you allow me to keep you company, or do you wish to be alone?" asked Mrs. Wallace, "I prefer being alone," was my answer. She rose to depart; and after a few more immaterial sentences had passed between us, she said, "I hope, Sir Charles, a good night's rest will afford your aching heart relief; if not, it will be better I trust to-morrow at this time, for every thing will be done in the morning according to your directions; hasty as the affair is, we must lose no time in giving ease to your mind." I endeavoured to say something which should sound like gratitude for the interest they took in my feelings; and Mrs. Wallace left me.

To-morrow *my* Margaretta becomes the wife of another, and by *my own* consent! Oh, how craftily do the accidents of life contrive to sicken man of his mortal state, and fill him with desires for a future existence!—Oh, Seymour, perhaps after death—but my brain will madden if I give a loose to thought.—Oh, that I could sleep till to-morrow noon were past!

I will sleep; I hear my apothecary upon the stairs, and he shall give me a dose to lull me for the night.

The apothecary is gone; he has counted out the drops of opium which I am to swallow; I shall call in my servant, lock my door, drink my cordial, and to bed. Farewell, dear happy friend, farewell—I almost wish to say for ever!

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIX.

Sir Charles Melford in continuation.

DEAR SEYMOUR,

Melford-house, nine o'clock in the morning.

NOTWITHSTANDING my draught I have been awake these two hours; another hour, and the seal of fate will be stamped upon my doom; another hour, and Margaretta will have pronounced vows of fidelity to Edward Wallace.—My whole frame is this morning languid almost to imbecility; I have little pain either in my head or heart. The Marchesa sends to enquire after my health, and whether she may be allowed to see me to-day; I return in answer, “that I am not worse, but beg not to receive a visit from her at present,” If I had never seen Marchesa Laura, or rather, if I had confessed my heart to Margaretta before my departure from England—but man is the creature of his own absurdity, and his fate is not in his hand.

I tasted scarcely any nourishment the whole of yesterday; my servant entreats me to take some breakfast; nature requires that I should make the attempt.

Ten o'clock.

OH, Seymour, I scarcely know how to hold my pen, or what I am writing now I have taken it up. Margaretta has broken her arm! how sad, yet how strange an occurrence! I shall instantly dress myself and go to her; I cannot keep myself away from Margaretta when she is in affliction. Adieu! yours truly,

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XL.

Sir Charles Melford in continuation.

WHEN I arrived at Briar-bank farm, the bone had already been set, and Margaretta put to bed; the fracture was a simple one in the left arm: she fell from the top of a flight of stairs which she was going to descend, at the bottom of which Edward was waiting to receive her, and conduct her to church. Strange, unaccountable accident! It had been the particular order of the surgeon that she should be kept quiet; accordingly, great as was my desire once more to behold Margaretta *not* the wife of another man, I constrained myself to leave the house without seeing her. Edward Wallace did not offer to walk home with me, nor did he even glance at what was to have been the transaction of the day; I suppose he omitted speaking upon it from delicacy to my feelings. How will this accident lengthen out the pangs which it is my lot to endure! I shall now be under the necessity of frequently seeing Margaretta before she is the wife of Edward Wallace, or of acting by her, what must appear both an unkind and an affected part, that of not visiting her at all: visit her I must; pray Heaven my feelings may be subservient to my reason when I do see her.

In my way home, I met the Marchesa Laura walking in the park which surrounds Melford-house; she expressed surprise at seeing me out, after the message I had just sent to her. I explained the reason of my being abroad; and as the Marchesa who had joined me in my walk, continued to lament the unfortunate accident which had called from home, I could not help saying at how peculiar a moment the unfortunate event

event had taken place. "Was Margareta," she asked, "going to be married to Edward Wallace?" "Yes," I replied, "how does that surprise you?"—"The same Margareta," she next enquired, "whom I have so often heard you mention as your protégée?"—"The same."—"Good Heavens," she cried, "I had always understood, that when her education was completed, you intended to make her your own wife."—"I never told you so, Marchesa."—"No, Sir Charles, but I could not help fancying that you had often, in my presence, betrayed such an intention to be in your heart." I endeavoured to smile away the opinion of the Marchesa; she smiled also, but did not seem convinced by the mode of contradicting her which I had taken. We walked forwards a few moments in silence; the Marchesa then said, "I have often asked you to bring me acquainted with your protégée, and have understood the reason why you did not acquiesce in my request; but I have now been two months in England confined to the solitude of a cottage, except when your visits have broken it; is my petition for her acquaintance still to be denied?" I paused a few moments, then answered, "When Margareta is sufficiently recovered to see a stranger, I will introduce you to her." She received my promise with pleasure. As we approached nearer to the house, she said, "I have a good mind to invite myself to pass the day with you; your spirits seem to be low, and unfit for solitude." I readily accepted the offer of her society; two hours before I could not have borne the conversation of any one created being. I cannot explain the cause of my feelings; but notwithstanding the anxiety I was experiencing on account of Margareta's painful situation, I felt in better spirits, and more inclined to be amused than I did when she was well,

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well, and going to——, hold, in that sentence I fear the cause is explained.

The Marchesa left me early in the evening. Our conversation during the day was upon indifferent topics; but still she found opportunities of expressing her surprise that Margaretta of whom I had spoken to her in terms of high encomium and rapture, would, but for the accident that had befallen her, have that day become the wife of Edward Wallace. Whenever she returned to the subject, I endeavoured to drive it away by the immediate introduction of some other topic; but I fear I succeeded ill in disguising my features to her discerning eyes.

I ventured to-day to enquire of her, whether she had yet received any letters from Italy, and she informed me that she had not.

Margaretta is well beyond the most flattering hopes of the surgeon who attends her; she is extremely composed, and has very little fever; she is an angel of meekness, and her temper will be her best physician. Farewell; you shall hear from me again very soon; yours sincerely,

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER XLI.

Sir Charles Melford to George Seymour Esq.

DEAR GEORGE,

Melford-house.

IT is now ten days since I wrote to you last, and I have not once heard from you since I gave you an account of my first discovery of my ever-to-be-felt disappointment; what can be the reason of your silence? Perhaps you do not know whether
to

to console, to blame, or to applaud me : our friendship admits of free speaking, and you never hesitated to address me openly before ; why then are you now silent ? Say something to me, for to hear from you at all will be a relief to my spirits.

Every favourable symptom continues in the fracture of Margaretta's arm ; I have seen her several times. Oh, what painful, yet exquisite moments are those passed in her society ! The first time of my seeing her, she burst into tears as I approached the bed, and extended her right hand towards me ; I put out mine to her, she kissed it, then said, "Forgive me, I am very weak, and could not forbear"—She saw my emotion, checked her words, then added, "but I will do so no more, I assure you."

She has faithfully kept her word ; Edward Wallace too, when he is present at the times I am sitting with Margaretta, scrupulously avoids shewing her any of the attentions of a lover ; no doubt out of respect to my feelings. Could I interrupt the happiness of such a pair ? I could not be a man to do it !

I told Margaretta to-day that I wish to introduce to her the Marchesa Laura ; "she is another of my daughters," said I, "and you must become acquainted."—"I have often wondered," replied Margaretta, "when I have considered the situation in which, from your own words, we both stand to you, that you should not before have made us known to each other."—"The Marchesa," I answered, almost uncertain what to say, "has experienced much unhappiness in life : both her health and spirits have been extremely bad ; she has not till very lately been at all calculated to mix in society ; but she now wishes to become acquainted with you."—"Pray bring her with you to-morrow morning," returned Margaretta.

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I have promised to comply with her request, and till that time is past I shall lay down my pen. . . .

I have been with the Marchesa to visit Margareta; I felt it an awkward introduction for me to make; but I contrived to hide my feelings. How many situations in life are there, in which it would never be discovered that a man had any occasion to feel embarrassed, unless his own confession betrayed him! "We must be friends," said the Marchesa, after the common-place sentences of such an interview had passed between them; "Will you admit me to your friendship?"—"Whoever is the friend of Sir Charles Melford, is my friend," replied Margareta. Their hands were then joined as pledges of their promised intimacy.

Margareta's visitors are at present not allowed to remain long with her, thus our stay was scarcely half an hour; when we rose to depart, Margareta said, "You see, Marchesa, my inability to return your visit, you must therefore make your's frequent to me."—"It is an invitation I accept with pleasure," returned the Marchesa.

We had scarcely left the house before the Marchesa said, "How exquisite a girl is Margareta; how interesting does the languor of illness make her beautiful countenance; how sensibly does every word she utters touch the heart!" I sighed, and the Marchesa continued. "How great, how noble a mind must you possess; with what absolute sway must you be able to regulate your passions, that you could ever persuade yourself to give up a prize like this, for the happiness of another man!"—"It is for her own happiness I hope and trust," I returned, "that she marries Edward Wallace."—"And this," replied the Marchesa, "is the strongest proof of your affection

tion for her ; you give up your own happiness to ensure her's ; what love, what gratitude, must she not feel for you !"— " She is not deficient," I answered, " in any one virtue of the human ; heart ; but I beg of you, Marchesa, do not mention this subject to me again, it is one I cannot bear to dwell upon."—" You are a man," she exclaimed, " without your equal ; may Heaven find some other means to make you happy !" I did not reply, and we reached her cottage in silence ; at the door we parted, and I immediately returned home to conclude my letter.

If you are still alive, and have a heart open to the entreaties of a friend, write to me as soon as you receive this from him who is yours most sincerely and ever,

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER XXLII.

George Seymour Esq. to Sir Charles Melford.

Kirton.

PARDON me, my dear Charles, that I have seemed to neglect you at a time when I know my correspondence would have given pleasure ; but I have had concerns at home, which have till this moment demanded all my attention : Mrs. Hughford is no more ; I followed her yesterday to the grave ; and the affliction of my Emma, who has lost in her the only parent whom she ever knew, has required all my attendance, and all my care. Now the last sad office which can be rendered her in this world has been performed for her much-beloved mother, the composure of my Emma begins to return, at least the violence of her grief is in

in a great measure abated, and I am enabled to snatch a few minutes to explain to my friend the necessity of my having thus long neglected to write to him.

In how peculiar a situation have you been placed and with what nobleness of mind have you acted! But, oh, Charles, this cruel accident which has befallen Margaretta! I scarcely lament her misfortune more than I do the effect which it has produced; I mean the necessary protraction of her marriage with Edward Wallace. I know the goodness of your heart, and I know how well it intends; but I know also the mutability of your heart: I have seen that it can at times command its passion with the most praise-worthy firmness; and I have also seen that the most trifling titillation of its senses can, at any unguarded moment, change the whole course of its feelings. Now, therefore, that you have once determined not to interrupt the happiness of Margaretta and Edward Wallace carefully guard your heart and tongue, that no unexpected moment may warm the one, or give an unintended loose to the other; I mean, watch carefully that Margaretta does not learn for whom that love was entertained, in which you were, according to the opinion of her and Mrs. Wallace, crossed. Were she once to gain this knowledge, mark what would be the event;—Margaretta would refuse to marry Edward, from the idea of her being bound by gratitude to make you happy, in preference to any other man; honour would forbid you to make her your wife, after you had once given her to Edward Wallace; and thus a discovery of your heart would only make wretches of two individuals; and your feelings become still more painful than they now are, from the knowledge of your having, in an unguarded moment, stabbed their happiness.

Take

Take my advice, you acknowledge that it has sometimes been good, and come to Kirton till Margaretta is perfectly recovered, and united to Edward Wallace. You will find here a diversity of scene to amuse your eye, and it is not impossible but that you might see some object capable of interesting your heart; but of that possibility, I suppose, I must not speak at present, while another passion is yet glowing in your breast. And if you fear while you are with us to correspond either with Edward Wallace, or Margaretta—which, indeed I think it would be more prudent for you not to do—request the Marchesa, since she is now become acquainted with Margaretta, to give you intelligence of her health in your absence.

Mrs. Seymour has long wished to visit Wales; come and stay with us till she finds it convenient to undertake the journey, and I think when that is performed, you may return with safety into Rutlandshire, and if you want an escort, we will promise to conduct you.

Short as my letter is, I must bid you farewell, for I cannot leave Emma any longer. Keep a strict guard on your conduct; remember that a discovery *now*, could but add to your misery; let this reflection be a tie upon your words and actions. Adieu and believe me, with the sincerest regard,

Your friend,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

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LETTER XLIII.

Sir Charles Melford to George Seymour, Esq.

Melford-house.

NO, Seymour ! I cannot leave Rutlandshire at present ; *I have* loved, nay I *do* love too tenderly, to be happy at a distance from Margaretta in her present state. The fracture in her arm improves daily ; but yet, I cannot leave her ; but do not fear me, I will not by look, word, or sigh, give the slightest hint that may lead to a discovery of the real state of my heart. I am melancholy it is true ; but of this they all think they know the reason, and it is passed over unnoticed.

The Marchesa is as constant as myself in her visits to Margaretta ; they both express satisfaction in the society of each other. It is now twenty days since Margaretta's unfortunate accident ; she is entirely free from fever, and the stay of her visitors is now at her own option. Sometimes she asks me to sit and read to her ; her requests are commands. Thompson is the author who best pleases her : I read to her this morning how Céladon lost his Amelia ; the picture touched my heart, I could read no more ; I complained of a hoarseness in my throat, and shut the book.

Sometimes she dictates her thoughts, and I put them for her upon paper. The lines which were sent to her by Mrs. Seymour (and for which I fear I have omitted to return her many, many thanks) are constantly on the table by her, she takes pleasure in imitating them.

Mrs. Seymour may yet know Margaretta, though not as *my* Margaretta ; but I will not again begin to indulge this very painful strain, for my
head

head and heart have been tolerably at rest for the last few days.

I hope this letter will find your Emma more composed; if I durst, at such a time, urge a petition to her, I would say, that Margaretta told me this morning, that nothing could give her so much pleasure as to be favoured with a copy of some more of Mrs. Seymour's elegant little productions.

Adieu: pardon this hint in a *father* who speaks on the part of his *daughter*, and believe me sincerely yours,

CHARLES. MELFORD.



LETTER XLIV.

George Seymour, Esq. to Sir Charles Melford.

Kirton.

CHARLES, Charles—your resolution is still unsteady, or you would come to Kirton. Why remain in Rutlandshire to feed a hopeless passion by daily intercourse with the object who provokes it? I have a good mind to come and take you away by force; for you are only lingering where you are, to lay up a store of misery for your future life: Oh, that you could but at this moment meet some other woman who might engage your attention, or interest your friendship!—I will not say warm your heart, but that might be the consequence, and the prefatory step to touching your heart, from any object whom you could once persuade yourself to think amiable: it is the only event which, in my opinion can give an effectual turn to your feelings—While you suffer yourself to be constantly the companion

companion of Margaretta, you are constantly seeing her accomplishments and her virtues in new examples; and, observing them through the eye of prejudice, you always conclude them increased, the object who possesses them still more desirable than she was before, and your own misfortune magnifying with every hour. Believe me, this is not the method you must pursue to regain your happiness: you have acted towards Margaretta and Edward Wallace with the nobleness of a man; be equally firm in contributing towards your own peace. I shall say no more on this subject; I have given you hints for reflection, and I hope you will use and improve them to the promotion to your own future happiness.

To show you that I am willing to pay attention to all your requests, though you slight mine, I have sent you another copy of verses written by my wife; but I only let you have them on this condition, that you will go and bid farewell to Margaretta for the present, and make them your parting gift.

Adieu: Mrs. Seymour joins me in most sincere wishes for the restoration of Margaretta's health, and your happiness. Do not write, but come.

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

Verses by Mrs. SEYMOUR, inclosed in the above Letter, on visiting a Spot in the Country where the days of Childhood were passed.

OH, scenes, where once in youth's gay hour
The days flew swiftly o'er my head;
Where sweets were cull'd from Nature's bow'r;
Where wishes were by virtue led!

Oh, scenes below'd! your sight once more
With magic rapture charms my eyes;
I feel the joys I've felt before,
Past hours of bliss like visions rise!

I pace the garden round and round,
 Rest on the mossy turf-built bank,
 Search the arch'd grotto's depth profound,
 Observe the willow's foliage lank ;

The hermit's solitude I seek,
 Where Meditation loves to dwell,
 Where mild-ey'd Peace, with Influence meek,
 Her charm benign breathes o'er his cell.

Ah, Mem'ry ! *now* I own thy pow'r ;
 Till *now* thy charms to me were lost ;
 Never didst thou until *this* hour
 Cause me to make thy name my boast.

All earthly joys—how few, how rare !
 Alas ! when childhood's dream is past
 Our hours are deeply ting'd with care,
 Each day more bitter than the last !

Then are we forc'd by Custom's sway
 To bend at Fashion's toilsome shrine ;
 To say the ball-room's glaring ray
 Beams nought but extacy divine !

Yet, ah ! in this tumultuous scene,
 Where all seems happiness and truth,
 Vice, rob'd in Virtue's garb serene,
 Smiles, treach'rous smiles, on easy youth !

The graceful vest, the nodding plume,
 The head bedeck'd with studs of pearl.
 The sandal lac'd, the sweet perfume,
 Each charm Love's standard can unfurl ;

The half-hid grace, by Art contriv'd
 To make the charm of beauty more ;—
 These lures are all of peace depriv'd ;
 The *name* they have---'tis all their store.

For, ah ! too frequent heaves *that* heart
 The world would judge the seat of bliss,
 With sighs from Love's unhallow'd dart,
 With woe's from Falshood's fatal kiss !

False, treach'rous index of the mind
 Are smiles drawn forth by Fashion's crowd;
 They wear the face of Peace refin'd,
 While their hearts burst with Sorrow's load!

How mildly soothes this calm serene,
 That hangs on all the scene around!
 Sylphs flying o'er the enamel'd green
 Flap the mild air with flow'rets crown'd.

Here could I range with rapture wild,
 Till night's dark shades were o'er me spread;
 By Mem'ry's witchcraft quite beguil'd,
 By Mem'ry's hand benignly led;

Through all those scenes where once in youth
 The joyful hours too swiftly flew,
 Where Life's sweet walk was bleis'd with Truth—
 The prospect ever bright and new.†

LETTER XLV.

Sir Charles Melford to George Seymour, Esq.

Melford-house.

DO not, my dear George, pray, do not ask me to leave this spot; I feel it impossible. I believe, that sooner than tear myself from Margaretta, at this moment, I could marry myself to the first woman who should come in my way, in order to prevent the possibility of the strange wheel of fortune taking such a turn as ever to make Margaretta mine. I suffer less than I did when I reflect upon the disappointment of my heart's darling wish; but I am more agitated, more impatient under my misfortune every hour;

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† The author is indebted for these lines to the same female friend who favoured him with 'Art's Petition to Nature,' and 'The Sailor.'

I am fit to quarrel with myself; and every thing, and every body about me; nay, there are times when I cannot forbear doing it. The Marchesa has seen me at these times when my feelings have hurried me into peevishness and passion: with what exquisite tenderness has she at those moments endeavoured to administer balm to the wound which she knows has poisoned my peace! Indeed, Seymour, her attentions are the most successful opiates that can be poured upon my lacerated heart; her concern for me is so tender so aptly expressed, and in terms so consoling to the victim of disappointed love, that there are moments when her attentions *do* draw my thoughts off from my misfortune, and lead my memory back to scenes of which I have promised her never even to hint at a repetition. My head was yesterday more than usually painful and agitated; I went into the air in the hope finding relief; I strolled towards the Marchesa's cottage; she was at home, and I went in. As I sat by her I leaned my head upon my arm, which rested on the table: I believe a tear was stealing down my cheeks. She rose, took a smelling-bottle from her pocket, moistened her fingers with a scent that it contained, and rubbed my temples. My imagination was extremely bewildered; I hardly knew whether I was awake or dreaming; my memory recurred to the first time of my beholding the portrait of the Marchesa, my first admiration of herself, and so on to our first private interview. Here thought rested. My mind was so forcibly impressed with the recollection of where I had once seen her, that I entirely forgot she was now standing by me: I believe I must have been more than half asleep; at all events my brain was hurried. I still continued to think myself with the Marchesa, in the casino at Venice; I saw her
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inviting me to sit down by her; and I had just placed myself by her side, when methought Margaretta rushed in, and stood before us. This appearance roused me from my trance, I started up, saw the Marchesa by my side, and fixed upon her a look meant to enquire, "how she came there?"

"Good God! Sir Charles," she cried, "what ails you? you are suddenly become ill: pray speak to me."

I know not how I was actuated at that moment; but I took her hand, kissed it, and put it to my forehead.

"Your head burns," she said. "So does my heart," I replied. She put her other hand upon that. At what moment she had done so before darted into my memory; I could bear my feelings no longer, and I pushed back my chair to release myself from her hands. "Let me hold your head," she said, following me. "No, no," I cried; "I cannot do you such an injustice."—"You have been thinking so deeply," she said, "that your senses are confused, and——"—"Indeed they are!" I interrupted her by exclaiming. "Pray, compose yourself," she said, coming after me to the window: "endeavour to sleep a little while." I turned round half-resolved to take her advice; she took my hand to lead me to the sofa. I certainly trembled, and required assistance to lead me to it; I sunk upon it, with my face towards the wall. She returned to the table, and sat down by it. I lay some while in a trance of thought: after some time I believe I slept; for when I turned myself round towards the window, it was too dusk for me to discern objects; I could just perceive the Marchesa still on her seat. She came and stood by the side of the sofa; "Are you better?" she asked.

asked. I could not reply ; for I knew not how to define my sensations. She put her hand upon my forehead ; " Your head does not burn so violently now," she said. In taking away her hand from my head, her fingers glided gently over my face ; my hand followed her's, and drew it back to my head : her wrist lay across my lips ; I felt the vibration of her pulse through her soft and elastic skin. My heart beat as if it would have forced its way out of my breast. I durst not trust myself any longer in my present situation : I sprang from the sofa, and saying, " I am better now, and able to walk home," took up my hat. The Marchesa entreated me not to go alone, but to let my servant be sent for. I would not allow it, and left the cottage alone.

Did it not require more than common fortitude to tear myself away, at that moment, from a woman with whom—but you know all I could say on the subject.

With a slow pace I entered my park wrapt in meditation. I reviewed all the scenes of my past life ; I found that whenever my plans had failed, the blame was my own, I was satisfied with my conduct towards Margaretta, and, for the first time, I felt something like a glow of pleasure about my heart, resulting from the knowledge of having made her happy at the sacrifice of my own felicity. These points having passed my thoughts, I began to enquire of myself whether I could not form some plan which might reflect a gleam of happiness on my future path through life. The emotion raised in my heart by the peculiar situation into which I had that afternoon been thrown with the Marchesa had not yet subsided ; the recollection of past pleasures still left a glow about my heart, but those pleasures were never to be repeated ; I had pledged my honour never to re-
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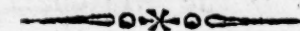
quire a repetition of them, and on that condition only an unfortunate woman had accepted my protection. I bad the intrusive idea vanish. Still my heart insisted upon telling me, that next to Margareta, the Marchesa possessed the power of rendering herself interesting to my feelings. "Margareta can never be mine," still I argued to myself, and "the Marchesa is already a wife." I paused a moment; then, almost insensible of what I did, I exclaimed aloud, "Oh, that it were possible for me to make the Marchesa Laura my wife!" As I spake these words I happened to cast my eyes upon the ground, and I perceived that I had wandered out of my path, and was now standing within a yard of the margin of a piece of water which runs through the park. I immediately turned round, and perceived Edward Wallace close behind me.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "for being so near you, but——" "But what?" I exclaimed hastily; I feared something more had befallen Margareta. "I was coming through the park," he answered, and seeing you walking alone, at this time in the evening, with your arms folded, as if you were disturbed, and towards the lake——" Again he paused; he had said enough to explain to me his fears. "I thank you," I said, "for your attention to me; I was lost in thought, but my senses are clear; you need not apprehend any thing from the lateness of my walk. I shall go home directly: good night." He returned my wish, and I walked forward. Whether he watched me into the house, I know not; but I am inclined to think he did.

He undoubtedly heard me exclaim, "Oh that it were possible for me to make the Marchesa Laura my wife!" It will now be decided by himself, his mother, and Margareta, that my melancholy

choly is occasioned by some obstacle to my espousing the Marchesa. No matter ; it may perhaps prove a fortunate misconception, which may assist me in keeping safe the true secret of my heart. Farewel, and believe me your sincere friend.

CHARLES MELFORD.



LETTER XLVI.

Sir Charles Melford to George Seymour, Esq.

Melford-house.

WELL, Seymour, it has turned out as I predicted—Margaretta believes that I am in love with the Marchesa, and that there is some irremovable impediment to my espousing her : neither Margaretta, nor indeed any one but yourself, has ever heard what little I do know of the Marchesa's story. I wonder what they conjecture her situation to be ; certainly not an improper one, or they would not draw this conclusion of my disappointment. Their mistaken opinion is fortunate for the character of the Marchesa, and, on her account, I am glad they have conceived it. A few days after my meeting Edward Wallace in the park, I was sitting with Margaretta, no one else was present ; she said, " How much am I indebted to you for bringing me acquainted with the Marchesa Laura ; she is of all women such a companion as I most value : her opinion of the propriety of employing all the hours of life is similar to my own, and her amusements are also like mine ; her good sense and acquaintance with the world render her conversation equally instructive and fascinating : but what makes her more than all

all dear to me is, the warmth with which she acknowledges her obligations to your friendship." I did not answer; and she added, "Have you known the Marchesa long?"—"I saw her for the first time in Venice," I replied. Margaretta appeared to want to know something more, yet to be undecided what to ask; presently she said, "The Marchesa appears some years older than you, Sir Charles."—"Only about five or six years," I answered. "She tells me," Margaretta continued, "that she has drunk deeply of the cup of calamity. She is very handsome now, and, I think, if her life had been free from misfortune, she would have been most beautiful; but the hand of sorrow sometimes carves as deep an impression on the features as the frost of age does."—"She has experienced severe trials," I returned. "And the tinge of melancholy which they have cast over her countenance renders her so infinitely interesting," returned Margaretta, "that, I think, when she contemplates her own person, she must almost cease to regret that they have befallen her."—"You should be a man to make that compliment," I said. "May not a woman be equally sensible of the perfections of one of her own sex?" asked Margaretta. I wished to turn off the subject, and answered, "I believe most women are very sensible of any perfection which they may happen to see in any one of their own sex; for I have always observed the majority of them endeavouring to decry its value, which I have as regularly noted to be a sure sign of their inwardly feeling its worth."—"You are severe upon our sex," said Margaretta. "Not more so," I replied, "than most of the sex are upon one another. I never yet saw a woman, except she was gifted with more sense than women of fashion usually have taken the pains to acquire, who did

not think she would undervalue herself in allowing another woman to be beautiful."—"I should make an ill subject for the rules of fashion," returned Margaretta, "for I should never be able to fix my thoughts enough upon myself to be always ill-natured to those around me; and this you seem to pronounce the system which a woman of fashion follows." I was not in a humour of sufficient gaiety to support this strain of raillery, thus I smiled, and continued silent.

After some time, Margaretta said, "The Marchesa, I suppose, is now suffering for having dedicated her early years at the shrine of fashion and dissipation. I cannot be too thankful for having passed mine in scenes which have given me no opportunity to lay a subject of future remorse upon my conscience."—"Such lives of retirement are more desirable," I answered, "than the world imagines."—"I wonder they are not more frequent," returned Margaretta; "surely some must sicken of hourly deceit and uninterrupted levity."—"Many do," replied I, "but they have not the requisites to sweeten a life removed from those pleasures which leave no time for thought: the want of an useful education, and the strength of custom, render it impossible to them to retire from scenes which many of them actually loathe."—"But the Marchesa has these requisites," returned Margaretta. "She is a rare instance," I answered. "Those who have embittered the days of such a woman," rejoined Margaretta, "must have much to atone for." I was silent; I had a great mind to leave the room; I feared being questioned upon what I could not answer, and thus increasing the mystery which was already hanging over the Marchesa and myself. I wished myself away, and yet did not move from my seat. "Does she fly to Eng-
land

land to avoid the tyranny of a father or a husband?" asked Margareta, after a pause. "My dear Margareta," I returned, "I cannot at present reveal, even to you, the story of the Marchesa." She took my hint to drop the subject, and immediately began to talk of a book which lay upon the table. I presently rose to depart, and the Marchesa's name was not again mentioned that morning.

What could these questions indicate, but that Margareta took interest in my happiness, and felt desirous of knowing the secret cause which my words had led her to suspect was existing to prevent my union with the Marchesa.

I feel very unhappy: oh that Margareta were but once become the wife of Edward Wallace! I think, if she were but united to him, I should be infinitely easier, than while there remains a possibility — I will not allow that there *does* remain a possibility.

My presence is necessary for two or three days on one of my estates in a neighbouring county.— As soon as I return to Melford-house I will write to you again; it is my greatest pleasure; all others I enjoy are negative ones. If I am with Margareta, I am only silently lamenting that an union in which I looked for her happiness to result from equality of sentiment is frustrated: if I am with the Marchesa, recollection is ever busy to curtail the pleasures of the present moments.— Adieu: to you I shall ever be the same

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XLVII.

Sir Charles Melford to George Seymour, Esq.

Melford-house.

SEYMOUR! I am born to live in a state of unceasing perplexity; a most unexpected, though natural, event has taken place, and I am again thrown into the greatest uncertainty of mind.

When I returned home yesterday evening from the excursion which I had been upon with my steward, I found Edward Wallace at Melford-house waiting my return. After I had enquired for Margaretta, and received a favourable answer to my question, Edward Wallace said (for I still continued standing in the air), "Sir Charles, will you favour me with a few moments' conversation?" I immediately assented, and we went together into the library. He shut the door, then said, "Pardon my question; but did I not, on that evening when I saw you in the park, hear you exclaim, 'Oh that it were possible for me to make the Marchesa Laura my wife?'"—"I certainly did speak these words," I replied. "I am glad I was not mistaken in what I thought I heard you pronounce," he returned; "for I hope that sentence explains the emotions which I have lately seen you express." These were strange words, incomprehensible to me, and I said, "What if this were the case?"—"Much, I hope, to the improvement of your happiness," he answered; "I have not urged the question from idle curiosity, but from a desire of being the first to bring you tidings of pleasure."—"For Heaven's sake," cried I, "keep me no longer in suspense; explain what you mean, I entreat you."—"The husband

husband of the Marchesa Laura is no more," he returned. "Good God!" I exclaimed; "by what means do you know this?"—"The Marchesa," he answered, "received a letter to that import this morning, whilst visiting Margareta; on opening the letter, she betrayed violent emotions; Margareta enquired the cause, and she replied, that it contained information of the death of the Marchese di Marvaldi. She also said, 'that she could not forbear at being at first moved by the suddenness of the intelligence; but that she had no cause to regret his death, except only the orphan state of her daughter, to whom he had fulfilled the duties of a father, for that to herself he had been a tyrant, and not a protector.'" I was so thunderstruck by this information, that every faculty was lost in surprise. Edward Wallace, I believe, continued to speak, but I was sensible only to my own thoughts, till a servant opened the door of the library, and announced the Marchesa herself. Wallace directly wished me a good night, and left the room as she entered it.

The Marchesa advanced toward me with a slow step, and put into my hand a letter; she then drew a handkerchief from her pocket, held it before her eyes, and turned her face toward a window.

The letter was in Italian, and ran thus :

"MY DEAR LADY,

"Much am I grieved that my first letter to you in England should bring tidings to lay an additional weight of misery upon a heart already too inhumanely laden. The Marchese di Marvaldi exists no longer; and your beloved and innocent daughter, Paulina, is now a defenceless orphan, without a protector in this country, except myself who am, indeed, a very insufficient one. This
is

it is that I know will give you pain ; the death of the Marchese cannot be a source of anxiety to you. A severe disorder which he caught carried him to the grave a few hours after it broke out : ' May Heaven forgive *him* ! ' I often exclaimed, ' and reward *you*, my worthy lady ! '—Come, I entreat you, come to Italy without delay and sooth the sorrows of your amiable and much to be pitied child. Your anxieties, I trust, are now almost at an end——”

Here the remainder of the letter had been rent off. “ From whom does this come ? ” I asked, on having perused it. “ From my only friend,” the Marchesa answered ; “ from the good Bernardo.”—“ Say not so,” I returned ; “ there is at least, one other person who takes interest in your fate.” “ Pardon me,” she said ; “ If I had been speaking of you, I should have said the same ; my heart is overburdened, and grateful in sorrow ; it gives a superlative epithet to those few who are its well-wishers.”—“ Will you go to Italy ? ” I rejoined, “ or will you commission Bernardo to conduct your daughter to England ? ” “ I must go,” she replied ; “ there are affairs to transact, at which my presence is indispensable.” Cannot you act by transferring your power into the hands of the law ? ” I asked, after a pause.—“ Impossible !—utterly impossible ! ” she answered with a solemn emphasis. I did not speak, and she added, “ It is also of the most material consequence that I do not delay my journey.” I arose and walked about the room. In a few minutes she said, “ I must now return home ; I have not yet acknowledged the receipt of Bernardo’s letter, and, for the ease of my dear Paulina’s heart, I must not delay it a single post.”—“ When shall you say that you intend being in Venice ? ” I asked. “ Very soon,” she replied ; “ but I shall not

not fix any exact time ; I am undecided how to travel ; it is a long journey for a woman to perform alone." She hesitated, and for some moments seemed lost in thought ; her eyes then brightened, and she added, " But this is a light task compared with those I have performed."— She rose, and was moving towards the door. I took her hand, led her back to a chair, and placed myself next her : " Stay, Marchesa,"— said I ; " grant me the favour of a few moments' more conversation before you go." She bowed assent to my request. " Will you," I continued, " now the Marchesa, your husband, is no more will you confide to me through what strange means your fate in life has been so extraordinary a one !"— " Do you still doubt," said she, whether or not I have merited the sufferings that have fallen upon me ? It is a cruel question from you." " You misconceive my meaning," I replied ; " in asking you whether you durst confide to me the means through which you had suffered, I do not include a possibility of your having been guilty." " Forgive me," she returned, " pray forgive me ; but the wretched heart of an unjust sufferer is easily wounded." She wiped the tears from her eyes ; then added, " Have I not repeatedly declared to you, that I may not reveal the secret of my fate ? Why did you then again, and at this moment too require of me its explanation ? —" " Believe me," said I, " that I repeated it without an intention to injure your feelings ; I thought that in consequence of the Marchese's death——" She interrupted me. " I cannot reveal the mystery in which I am wrapt," she exclaimed, " until——" She hesitated. " Until when ?" I asked. " I have already told you," she said, " that with the safety of my future peace, I cannot explain it ; when I arrive

arrive in Italy, I shall be no longer bound to preserve it.

I now, for the second time, plainly perceived, that she was bound by the church to maintain a secret, from which, on her return to Italy, she hoped to be absolved.

"Suffer me to leave you now," she said; "I am anxious to my letter; in the morning I shall return to take your advice upon my journey."

As she rose I took her hand as a mark of tenderness at parting; she pressed her fingers with warmth upon mine as I held her's in it. I know not how I was impelled at that moment, but I insensibly felt my lips upon her's. She withdrew her face hastily from mine, and said with firmness, "Forbear, Sir Charles, forbear; I am now my own mistress, and the day of my bodily humiliation is past." She spoke these words with a fervour that betrayed the generous satisfaction of regained honour, to me an evidence of the guilt of the deceased Marchese. I rejoiced in her honest pleasure, while I sighed inwardly for the hypocrisy of her husband. I thought silence the best apology for what I had done, and let go her hand without speaking. She bade me good-night, in a tone that implied her momentary displeasure to be vanished, and I warmly returned her wish.

When the Marchesa had left me, I traversed the room with a new subject for reflection. 'It was now possible for me to make the Marchesa Laura my wife!'—'Margaretta could never in honour become mine!' Was it not then reasonable that I should seek some other woman with whom I might enjoy a secondary portion of happiness to that which I had expected to obtain in an union with Margaretta? Doubtless it was reasonable that I should do so. There was no strong bond of sentiment to unite me to the Marchesa, the concealment

ment which she was constrained to use towards me had prevented that ; but there was the powerful incitement of passion ; the recollection that the charms of the Marchesa had afforded me more delight than those of any other woman I had ever tasted, and that those charms were never again illicitly to pour rapture through my senses. Then I considered that she already esteemed, nay almost revered me as the preserver of her life, and the protector of her subsequent days, and that she could not but adore the man who should make her his honourable wife, if it was only from contrasting his conduct with that of him to whom she had been united.

This consideration so far resolved me, that nothing prevented me from immediately going to the Marchesa and making her an offer of my hand, but that I felt some kind of repugnance, that there should be a part of my wife's conduct which had never been explained to me.

Again I reflected that it was folly to refuse taking a woman to be my wife, whom I in every respect esteemed, because it had been her hard fate to have been married to a first husband who had driven her to a conduct shocking to her feelings, and bound her to secret his motives, by laying upon her exposure of them what she believed to be an injury to the peace of her future life.

She was obliged, she said, to depart for Italy immediately.—If she *was* ever to be my wife, it was doubtless my business to go with her to Venice her husband, and not, by delaying to avow my intention of espousing her, perhaps reduce her to the necessity of taking another companion on her journey, perhaps lose her for ever.—No, no, I had already lost too much by delay, and I determined not to risk the little chance of future happiness
which

which was now in my power, by repeating my folly.

Still there was one possibility which seemed to make against me ; might not the Marchesa, from having so severely suffered in her first state of matrimony, refuse risking her happiness in a second ?

This appeared to me a point against which I should at least be prepared with some good arguments ; I determined to form some to this effect before I went to her, and threw myself into the chair where she had been sitting. As I sat, my foot kicked against a piece of paper which lay upon the floor ; my eye was drawn towards it ; and as it lay on the ground I saw that it was written upon, and that the writing was not mine. I took it up : the words were Italian ; and I immediately concluded that it was that part of the Marchesa's letter which I had observed to have been rent off : I looked for the signature of Bernardo, in order that I might be certain whether it was a part of that letter or not. Part of the paper now in my hand had been rent off both from the bottom and the top, thus the signature I had looked for was not to be discovered. Uncertain now what it might be, and not supposing it of consequence to any one, I cast my eyes carelessly over it, and was on the point of throwing it down again upon the floor, when my own name caught my eye ; this excited my curiosity, and I then determined to read it : the words it contained were as follows :—

“ Oh ! my dear lady—(this could be no other than Bernardo addressing the Marchesa)—how miserable an existence has your's been, I may say, even from the cradle ! now, I hope, you will begin to know what peace of mind is. Oh that you could be so fortunate as to meet with some man of worth, who might, in the character of your second husband, recompense to you your past calamities !

lamities !—I know to whom the honourable affections of your heart point, but I much fear this darling wish of your's can never be accomplished ; though Sir Charles Melford—(mark this George)—behaves to you with all the honour, friendship, and kindness of a man who had not known you in the situation in which you were once reduced to meet him, yet he will never think of marrying a woman whom he has once possessed, few men now-a-days are so honourable ; and I am sure I need not caution you, not to commit so encroaching a trespass upon his hospitality, as to hint, even in the most distant manner, that you wish to become his wife.—No, no, my dear lady, you may be tolerably happy now if you please, therefore be content to enjoy the friendship of Sir Charles Melford, and if any man whom you could love should——”

Here the paper had again been torn ; but I had read enough, I had found that the Marchesa loved me : I had expected only gratitude from her, and I had learnt that the tenderest passion of her heart was given to me ; this I determined was the greatest consolation I could ever have for the loss of Margaretta. I felt in something like spirits, though I was in reality sad. The evening was far advanced, and I therefore resolved to make the explanation of my heart to the Marchesa the first business of the morning.—Farewell ; I do not ask you to pity me, or to rejoice with me ; when you hear my name, give it the sigh of friendship.—Yours ever,

CHARLES MELFORD.

LET-

LETTER XLVIII.

Edward Wallace to George Seymour, Esq.

SIR,

Briar-bank Farm.

I WRITE at the request of Sir Charles Melford, to desire, that till you hear from him again, you would direct any letters with which you may favour him to be left for him at the house of Monsieur L'Estrange, in Paris; he is this morning set out for that city, on his road to Venice. This is all he wished me to communicate to you; he says you will perfectly understand the reason of his leaving England, and that he will write to you as soon as he reaches Calais. I am, sir,

Your very humble servant,

EDWARD WALLACE.

 LETTER XLIX.
Sir Charles Melford to George Seymour, Esq.

SEYMOUR,

Calais.

I AM married! The Marchesa Laura is my *my wife*. On the morning subsequent to that evening on which I last wrote to you I went, as I told you I had resolved, to the Marchesa; I knew her sentiments with regard to me, thus a mutual explanation of our wishes was soon made, and she received the offer of my hand with a rapture which she could ill conceal. Do not expect me to say much upon what is just past, for though I am infinitely glad that the event has taken place,
it

it gives me no satisfaction to dwell upon it. An explanation of our mutual sentiments being once made, I requested Laura to be ready to leave Rutlandshire the next morning; we had agreed that our union should be cemented by an English priest at Calais, and all I then wished was to leave England immediately, as I felt myself unequal to remaining any longer where Margaretta was, when I had once pledged myself to become the husband of another woman. I returned home to give orders for our journey; and it was my intention then to go and inform Margaretta of the destiny that awaited me, and to bid her farewell; but when the moment of going to Briar-bank Farm arrived, I found myself unequal to the task: I accordingly in the evening sent for Edward Wallace, I informed him of my abrupt departure from England and its cause; I received his congratulations upon the event, and when he left me, I gave him a note to carry to Margaretta, of which you have here a copy.

“Farewell for a while, my dear Margaretta; may every happiness attend you while I am absent. You already know the cause which hurries back the Marchesa to Venice, and Edward Wallace will explain to you the reason that carries with her, if you have not (which I suspect) long since surmised it. Pardon me, my dear daughter, that I have not come in person to take my leave of you, a multiplicity of affairs to which I am obliged to attend, have rendered that impossible; at my return you will be the wife of Edward Wallace, and I hope restored from your late accident so perfectly as to have almost forgotten that it ever befel you.—Once more farewell, my dear Margaretta; that peace and felicity may bless your days, is the sincere wish of your friend and father,

CHARLES MELFORD.

This

This was all I wrote ; I durst not venture to say any more upon her marriage or my own.

On the appointed morning we left Melford-house ; little more than two days brought us to Dover, and the morning of the third landed us at Calais, and we were yesterday united by the laws of the church.

It's done, it's past, the struggle is over : if I have only met the deserts of my own folly in losing Margareta, surely I deserve some gentle smiles from fortune, for having been so careful not to interrupt her happiness.

When the Marchesa's affairs in Venice are settled, I shall return with her and her daughter to England, unless Paulina's affection is still firm to the worthy Marquis de Belleterre ; if it is, she shall now meet no obstacle to her union with him ; so her mother has promised me ; for Paulina raised an interest in my heart when I saw her, which has caused me to think of her happiness since I am become her father-in-law.

When I shall have an opportunity of writing to you again I know not. Adieu ; and believe ever your
CHARLES MELFORD.



LETTER L.

Sir Charles Melford to George Seymour, Esq.

DEAR SEYMOUR,

D—.

WE entered Italy last night, and I just now receive a letter from you which has been sent after me from Paris. You speak exactly as I expected you would upon the late occurrences of my life ; that is, you forbear all comments upon what is past, and give me your wishes for the felicity of the future, with a sincerity of expression which
has

has always rendered your friendship too sure to be mistaken. From my heart I thank you for that interest which you have ever taken in my fate ; may the time soon arrive when I shall make you my personal acknowledgments.

You doubtless want to know the situation of my mind. I still feel perfectly satisfied with my conduct, so far as it has rendered it impossible for me now to interrupt the happiness of Margaretta with Edward Wallace, and has given me possession of the charming person of Laura ; but still my thoughts will sometimes return with force to the disappointment of my early views, and whisper to my heart the superiority of an union contracted from sentiment, over that formed from passion : upon the whole, my mind is as much at ease as I could expect it would be at this time.

But Laura appears to me changed since our marriage ; her spirits were never very high, but they are now extremely low ; when I remark that they are so, she endeavours to turn aside my observation, but does not deny the truth. The other morning I happened to be lying awake upon my pillow, my back was turned towards her, and I believe she thought me asleep ; she raised herself in the bed, leant over my shoulder, kissed my cheek with violence, burst into tears, and turned from me : I immediately raised my head towards her, and enquired, “ what affected her ? ” She started and answered, “ Nothing—nothing affects me ; ” sprang directly from the bed, and dressed herself. Yesterday evening I found her kneeling before a chair, and praying with a crucifix held to her breast : I continued in the room, and while she prayed, I imagined that I frequently heard her use the word “ murder : ” when she rose from her devotion and perceived me, she shrieked, then said, “ Why did you come in to fright me ? ”

“ To

"To fright you!" returned I; "why should my presence at any time alarm you?"—"I conjure you, in the name of the holy Jesus, to tell me whether I prayed aloud," she exclaimed, "Not absolutely." I said. "Did I mention any name?" she asked eagerly. "No, you did not," I replied. "What *did* you hear me say?" she rejoined with a countenance that betrayed the liveliest agony of mind. "I thought," said I, "that you once or twice spoke of murder." Her lips turned pale, her teeth began to chatter, she trembled and sunk into a chair. A few moments passed in silent surprise on my part, I then said, "I insist upon your explaining to me the emotion that now agitates you." She threw herself upon her knees before me, caught my hands in her's, and grasped them some time before she was able to speak; she at last faintly uttered, "Kill me, but do not drive me mad, by demanding this explanation of me."—"Murder of whom?" I cried, hardly sensible of what she had said. "Not of you, by the God of heaven!" she said: there was something in her manner impressive of truth; and before I could answer her, she added, "You should not have listened to my prayers; remember the vow that lies on my conscience."—"I am now your husband," said I. "You are," she answered in a solemn tone, "and the time is at hand, that you will know all I know:" she released my hands from her's, and rose with recollected strength. I threw myself into a chair; I was uneasy without the power of having my anxiety relieved; I felt almost angry with myself for having made myself the husband of a woman who durst not suffer me to enter into her confidence. 'Murder,' continued to ring in my brain. The Marchesa walked some time about the room, she then came up to me with an air of gaiety, and said,

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said, "Come, come, you must not be sad because I am under the necessity of having a secret a-part from you for a little while longer; a few days more will bring us to Venice, and then all will be explained."—Let us to bed," said I, "I wish if I can to sleep."—"Go you to bed by all means," she returned; "I shall go back to our apartment, for I have some hours' writing which I must perform. "I knew it was useless to ask any questions, and suffered her to go. I threw myself upon the bed in thought, but I had not lain there many minutes when your letter was brought to me; I read it, found myself unable to sleep, and rose to answer it.

How much do I seem to have to say to you, and yet I know not what to write; I shall hasten to Venice with all possible expedition; I hope to congratulate myself on all my trials and perplexities being past when I arrive there, for then Laura says the mystery in which she is involved will be explained away to me.

Laura did not return to the chamber till eight o'clock this morning; she brought with her a packet of papers, which she locked into her trunk, and her air was that of a person relieved from some concern of importance which had been lying upon her mind.

We are to set off in half an hour, and travel day and night till we reach Venice; oh that we were already there! Adieu, adieu. Yours,

CHARLES MELFORD.

M

LETTER

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CHARLES MELFORD.

M

LETTER

LETTER LI.

Sir Charles Melford to George Seymour, Esq.

DEAR GEORGE,

T—, seven in the Morning.

WE have travelled since I wrote you last with no delays but those of necessity; all our repose has been taken in the carriage; the Marchesa seems even more anxious than myself to arrive at the place of our destination, and a few hours will now bring us to it, for we are now only a few leagues distant from Venice. We are at this moment stopping at the desire of Laura, who tells me she has just recollected something which it is of the utmost importance to her immediately to write down. The agitation both of her mind and body has for these two last days been extreme; I cannot forbear thinking that some matter of importance, some evil deed I fear (I argue from the dreadful word I overheard in her prayers) is about to be laid open to the world. She has again, and of her own accord, assured me that I am not concerned in the secret which is at present locked up in her breast: she confesses it to be a dreadful one, and her whole frame is convulsed when she asserts it. Is she going to give information to the state against a murderer? surely the late Marchese—but no; what would it avail to allege a crime against one who has ceased to breathe?—It cannot be possible that she herself—horrid idea!—Oh! no, no, she has repeatedly avowed to me that she has been infinitely unfortunate, but never willingly criminal.

She comes into the apartment. “Now let us to Venice,” she exclaims in a tone that marks feelings animated almost to phrenzy; her eyes throw out an expression that excites both compassion and horror.

horror. She has not mentioned her daughter in many days; some one point, and that only, occupies her thoughts. She will taste no refreshment this morning, but conjures me to let us be gone.—I obey her.—Farewell for a while, and continue to believe me truly yours,

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER LII.

Sir Charles Melford to George Seymour, Esq.

Venice.

AT length, Seymour, we are arrived on the spot of elucidation. From the first moment that Venice appeared within our view, the Marchesa threw a handkerchief over her face, and sunk back into a corner of the gondola: I addressed her several times, and she did not reply: at last she said, "Pray do not speak to me; order the gondola to the hotel of the Virgin, and let me have a room to myself as soon as I get there."—Her directions were followed, and she is now gone to a private apartment: I have by her desire dispatched a note to summon Bernardo to her.

.....
Bernardo has entered the hotel, and is gone to the apartment of Laura: he is doubtless, from his attachment to her, and her confidence in him, acquainted with all that passes in her heart. How strange it seems to me to be excluded thus mysteriously from the secrets of my wife.

Laura comes.

She entered the room with a countenance pale as death, yet with every nerve apparently strung —

by the energy of some private feeling: she came up to me with a packet in her hand, which I believe was the same I saw her lock in her trunk at D——, when she had passed the night in writing. —“Take these papers, Sir Charles,” she said, “put them into your pocket, and take particular care of them, they are of consequence; for a private reason I have written your name on their outside.” I obeyed her request; she then continued, “I have seen Bernardo; Paulina is well, and a gondola will arrive in a few minutes to convey us to the Pallazo di Marvaldi:” she paused, then added, “in one short hour you will learn the secret of my heart.” —“Compose yourself,” I returned; “nurture your strength till you may require its use.” She smiled, but it was a smile of agony. “Are you already absolved from your vow?” I asked. “Almost I am,” she answered. “Let me then participate your feelings,” I cried, “by learning the cause of them,” I rose and took her hand. “Cannot you wait this one short hour more?” she asked: she spoke this in a tone of voice that could not fail to move any one to whom it had been addressed to the grant of her petition; methought I never saw her look so interestingly beautiful as at that moment; one hand of mine already held one hand of her’s, and I was throwing my other arm round her waist in order to embrace her, when with a mild, yet sorrowful dignity, she drew herself away from my grasp, and said in a low yet solemn voice, “Not now, not now.” — She moved towards the door, then added, “When the gondola arrives we will depart, till then I am going to my chamber; having said this she left me.

The gondola is come to convey us once more to the house of the deceased Albert di Marvaldi. How different will be my present approach to it, to what my last was! Oh! how well I remember

ber there bidding farewell to Laura, and endeavouring to procure from her a smile. I mentioned it to her this morning, but could not induce her to speak upon that or any other subject.

Laura opens my door and beckons me to follow her to the gondola; I lay down my pen to attend her. How strange a moment of my life is this! How still more wonderful may be "the next short hour!" Yours,

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER LIII.

Sir Charles Melford to George Seymour, Esq.

Village of C—i.

OH, my revered, my only friend! how complicated a wretch is the man who now addresses you!—I have now gained the pinnacle of human misery! I have not written of four days; a little while ago, I supposed I never should have held my pen again.—Oh great God of Heaven, what a scene have I witnessed!—I almost wish to lose the power of thought, that I may lose the recollection of a transaction which alone occupies my brain; a transaction, horrid to the feelings of man infamous in its nature, and condemned by every law of virtue and religion. Almighty Powers, what have I done, that such an aggravated calamity, such a mountain of all the vices which are to be hated by man, should have fallen upon me! Oh God! oh God! my brain burns, my reason is almost thrown off her seat.—And when I reflect on your admonitions against the woman whom I made my wife—my wife!—Oh, Jesus, have mercy! blot out this recollection from a brain which

which cannot suffer more than it already feels.—I will endeavour to collect strength and resolution to tell you what has been this horrid act, from the sight of which my blood has never been warmed. Pardon me, Heaven, thou knowest what I have undergone, how peculiarly I have suffered, how agonizing a climax has sealed my future misery in this life! Oh pardon me, if I pray that the chill of horror which still hangs over my trembling nerves, may be the messenger of speedy death! I think I concluded my last letter by saying, that Laura called me to accompany her to the gondola which was to carry us to the house of the Marchese di Marvaldi: I entered it with her;—we had scarcely got into it, before I perceived that large drops of perspiration were rolling down her face, that her hands were fixed upon her body, and that she was pressing them down, as if to repel some inward pain. “You are unwell,” said I; “you have permitted your feelings to gain ascendancy over your strength, till they hold you in absolute torture.” She did not answer to these words, but said, “Pray order the gondoliers to row faster, much faster, as fast as they can.” I complied with her request. We were now approaching near to the place of our destination; I looked at her as I informed her that we had not much farther to proceed, and I saw that her eyes were almost starting from their sockets, her face convulsed, and a thin foam forcing its way through her lips. “You are suffering violently,” I said, “Nothing,” she replied, “for one who is standing on the bank of Hell.” I had only time to remark that these words were spoken in a tone of ferocity, very different to any accents I had ever heard her pronounce before, when the gondola stopped at the Pallazo di Marvaldi: she rather flew than stepped out of it, and ran into the house: I followed her

her into the hall, where stood Bernardo and another servant.

Oh, God, my friend! I know not how to proceed; the pangs of my heart defeat the powers of my hand. I must a while lay down my pen.

You must pardon me if I am incoherent, wild in my account; the description I have undertaken to give is more than my mind is competent to go through with composure. I have endeavoured to lull the feelings of my heart, that I may, as well as I am able, proceed.

Bernardo and another servant stood in the hall; as I entered it, Laura stopped, and almost fell against the wall: Bernardo caught her arm and supported her; she uttered a groan drawn from the very bottom of her heart; stood for a few moments in silent reflection with her eyes fixed on Bernardo, she then threw her arms round his neck, and kissed his cheek with a passionate emotion: I saw a tear start into his eye. Bernardo then pointed to me: she cast her eyes upon me advanced a single step towards me, uttered a stifled shriek, then stopped: "I cannot—I cannot!" she exclaimed, and again turned towards Bernardo; "Come," she said, "I am prepared——" These were not all the words she spoke, but I did not hear the remainder of the sentence. Bernardo immediately went forward; she followed him with her hands clasped and raised, and I walked after her in silent amazement and expectation.

You cannot guess my surprise and horror, for I fear I shall ill describe it, though I felt it so acutely. Bernardo threw open the door of that apartment over the chimney of which I had first seen the portrait of the Marchesa, and no sooner was the door opened than he exclaimed, "Sir

Charles

Charles and Lady Antonia Melford." It first struck me as extraordinary that a mother should be thus formally announced to a daughter, and next I was astonished by Bernardo calling her Antonia; but I had no time to reflect, for she stopped at the door of the apartment, took my hand, and led me into it. "My husband," she said in a voice of authority. I looked forward; but, oh God of Omnipotence! what tongue can describe my feelings, when I perceived seated at the farthest end of the room, *The Marchese di Marvaldi, his daughter Paulina, and, still more confusing to my senses, a female the very counterpart of her who held my hand!!!*

It appeared to me as if the Marchesa Laura was holding one of my hands, and still that the Marchesa Laura was seated by a table at the other end of the room.

My ideas were so bewildered, that all the power of thought was lost to me; I could only perceive that equal astonishment to mine so portrayed on the features of all present.

A dead silence reigned for some moments.

I turned my eyes upon her who held my hand, she saw the expression of enquiry which was written upon my features, and answered it: "Sir Charles," she said, in a voice of firmness, "I am *not Laura*; behold her there." She released my hand from her's, and pointed with that which had held it to the female, her own exact resemblance, seated by the table. After a pause of a few moments, she added with a ferocious smile, "I am her sister Antonia whom she scorns."

Extreme consternation was still marked on the countenances of the Marchese and his family, but they neither attempted to rise or speak: excess of wonder seemed to have locked up their faculties.

For

For myself I still stood by the door in a state of feeling which it is impossible to describe.

She who had just entered the apartment with me, advanced a few steps towards the Marchese, she then stopped, and fixed upon him her wild and piercing eyes: "Albert," she said, "do you observe who stands before you? If you dare look upon Antonia, turn your eyes this way."—"What brings *you hither*?" asked the Marchese, in a calm but commanding voice. "To fulfil my vow," she returned, with indignant resolution; "Do you not remember the morning on which you took the hand of my sister in marriage? Do you not recollect that I told you, before you led her to the altar that your smiles of love should be turned into frowns of torture? Have you forgotten that when you had taken the marriage vow to Heaven, I knelt before the same altar where you had been kneeling, and pledged a vow to—Hell! You knew not then the import of my oath; now, Albert, hear it, and tremble." The astonishment of the Marchese appeared to increase, and he rose from his seat. She continued to speak thus: "My vow included a triple obligation: by the first I swore, that some immediate action of my life should bring disgrace upon your family; this is performed through the birth of my unfortunate child: by the second I swore, that if the darkest of human arts could accomplish my wish, I would become the wife of a man equal to yourself; it is done, Sir Charles Melford is my husband; and by the third I swore, that when this prayer of my soul was fulfilled, your happiness should not outlive my triumph." As she spoke the last words, she made a sudden step forward, snatched from her breast a stiletto, which had been concealed in the folds of her robe, and plunged it into the heart of the Marchese. "Now I am

happy," she cried; "the perjured, the accursed Albert dies the victim of my revenge by my own hand."

This was the woman whom I had made my wife!—this fiend? Oh, great God of Mercy! A mist seemed to cloud my senses; my whole frame dissolved into imbecility, I staggered to a chair, sunk upon it, and my eyes closed with the most painful heaviness.

The shrieks of Paulina, exclaiming that her father was murdered, soon recalled my wandering senses. I started wildly up, and cast my eyes successively on every object around me.—The Marchese lay on the floor bleeding, and uttering groans of violent agony. The Marchesa Laura (*for Laura indeed was sitting by the table*) had fainted in her chair. Paulina stood by the side of her mother, piercing the air with her shrieks, apparently desirous to rush out of the apartment for assistance, but not daring to pass the murderers, who stood between her and the door, smiling on the object of her nefarious act with the savage grin of horrid satisfaction, and with the instrument of her crime, from which slow drops of blood were falling, still clenched in her uplifted hand!!!

Bernardo now ran into the room; the attitude and features of those in it immediately explained to him the scene before him; the old man uttered a mingled cry of horror and indignation; then turning to Antonia, he exclaimed, "Revengeful, infatuated wretch! was it to repay me with the murder of my master, that I entered into plans for promoting your happiness? Complete your work, and kill me too!" She let the stiletto fall from her hand, and threw herself upon a sofa without the slightest emotion of feature.

"Oh,

"Oh, my poor master!" cried Bernardo, throwing himself upon his knees by the side of the prostrate body, and raising its head upon his arm, I knelt down on the other side of the dying man; I took his hand in mine, I wanted to convince him that I had no willing concern in the base deed of his death, and to entreat his pardon for what I had done, if I had by any means been blindly accessory to it. He nipped my hand as I held his, but it was only the convulsive grasp of fast approaching dissolution. I spoke to him several times; so did Bernardo; he appeared insensible to our words, and uttered only deep groans, while convulsive starts snatched his blackening body.

The Marchesa Laura still continued insensible on her chair. The Marchese gave a loud intermitted sigh, which I thought to be his last. Paulina heard it, left her mother and came round to the feet of her father. The agony of death was extending his jaws, and stiffening his eyeballs in their sockets. Again Paulina shrieked, "Oh, my father will die!" she exclaimed; "call in assistance, save my dear father's life!" She now darted past Antonia, and rushed into the gallery, still exclaiming, "Oh, save my dying father—save him—save my father!"

Her well known and tenderly-beloved voice recalled the almost-extinguished sense of the Marchese: "My child, my Paulina!" he uttered, in accents almost too low to be distinguished; "may Heaven take thy innocence"—"to its mercy," he would have said, but the last pang that was to disunite the soul and body was upon him, a writhe of agony bent his every limb, then stretched them out to bend no more!

The sounds of persons approaching the apartment was now heard. The Marchesa was beginning to revive, and calling in murmuring accents upon her husband. Bernardo clasped his hands

hand's over his deceased master, uttered a deep sigh, which the motion of his lips made me conceive to be accompanied by an inward prayer; then rose, went to the Marchesa Laura, took her in his arms, and bore her away from the apartment, through a door opposite to that towards which the voices and footsteps were advancing.

The tygres: Antonia still maintained a countenance not calm, but satisfied, and seemed tortured only by some inward bodily pain. I had scarcely time to notice this, before a number of servants, in the midst of whom was the frantic Paulina, rushed into the room; and last, though not with the least interested countenance, came the Marquis de Belleterre.

He approached the body of the Marchese, saw life was extinct, and I perceived that horror ran through his veins. He darted through the servants, and went up to Paulina, who had come but a few footsteps into the apartment; "Your mother is gone from this room," he said; "let me entreat you to leave it too: pray oblige me by going away immediately; for your own sake follow my request."

She leant on the arm of a female servant, and retired.

As the Marquis de Belleterre returned to the centre of the room, Bernardo re-entered by the door through which he had carried away the Marchesa Laura. "For Heaven's sake explain to me what I see!" exclaimed the Marquis; "who has done this deed?—Sir Charles Melford here too!" I bowed in acknowledgment of his exclamation, speak I could not. "Sir Charles Melford is innocent," returned Bernardo; for the young Marquis's eyes were fixed on me in wild suspicion. "Who then is the atrocious murderer?"

derer?" asked the Marquis with vehemence. "*I am,*" replied Antonia with cool firmness. The Marquis cast a look of doubt, first at Bernardo, then at me: "It is so, indeed," returned Bernardo.

The Marquis was preparing to address her; she rose from the sofa, the drops of blood which had trickled down upon her white garment from the blade of the stiletto were now visible, and as he saw them he involuntarily started back. "You are going to tell me," she said, "of the racks and tortures of this world. I scorn the power of man to injure me, and fly self-willed to retribution in a second state, to atone for my past deeds to a superior Judge. I fear not punishment, for I have braved it; and however keen the agony of expiation across that gulph which I am now about to pass, I have glutted myself on this side of it with the sweets of revenge. I mock the severity of earthly laws, I am past their reach, death is already in my veins: I have swallowed the juice of laurel; but it is too tardy a dissolution, I pant to close my eyes upon this hated world: the most ingenious tortures of the damned must be delight, compared to the vile loathing with which my sight beholds this earth of disappointment and injustice. Here there is no equity; hereafter, whatever my fate, it will be just. I have sinned; but even a sinner has the satisfaction of justice; and this shall give my soul the wings to fly to it." In saying this she attempted to stoop, and pick up the stiletto; a sudden pang, occasioned by the poison she had swallowed, seized her, and she fell with her face upon the ground.

She raised herself upon one hand, and turned her head towards me: "Forgive me," she said; "I ask no pardon but your's." I felt it impossible to refuse her request in the situation she was in,

in, and I was dropping upon my knee to speak the words she had begged of me to pronounce, when, in a loud shriek, she emitted her last breath.

My senses stiffened, and I became insensible to the scene around me.

The next occurrence of which I have any recollection is that of Barnardo's leading me from a gondola into a house in one of the streets in Venice. As soon as we had entered it, he said, "I have brought you hither, sir, because I thought a private house would, at this time, better suit your inclination than an inn; a relation of mine lives here, who is honest, though poor, and will carefully attend to your wants: I have sent also to summon your servant to you." He led me into a chamber, and I threw myself upon the bed without speaking. "Do not afflict yourself, sir," he said, "you can have lost nothing by losing such a woman as Antonia."—"Monster!" I exclaimed; "deceitful, base monster of ingratitude!"—"When you did love her——" Barnardo was going on; I interrupted him by calling out, "Love her! I have *liked* her, but I *never* loved her."—"She deceived even me, who thought I knew her so well," returned Barnardo. He then apologized that he must leave me to attend to his unfortunate mistress; again told me, that the house of his relation was entirely at my command, and left me.

When the power of reflection returned to me, how evident appeared all the arts which this fiend of revenge had used to make me one of the instruments for accomplishing her disgraceful vow. That two women should so nearly resemble each other in person, that to one who was unacquainted that there was a second both should seem the first, especially when the face of the second was seen by him

him only for a few moments, in the indistinct light of the moon, did not astonish me; for I have known similar instances of the great resemblance of features; and after the private interview with her in the casino at Venice, I saw Antonia no more, as you will yourself perceive from the nature of the imposition she practised on me, till she followed me in the disguise of a youth to the little inn upon the road; and this disguise was purposely worn by her, in order that if any trivial difference of figure or person between her and the Marchesa Laura should have struck me, it might be attributed to the alteration of dress.

Infamous woman! and oh, execrable dupe that I have been to her deeply-planned deceits! And for a momentary enjoyment with this vile wretch, this monster of hypocrisy, this murderer, I have forfeited a life of happiness with Margarétta!

My brain burns almost to madness; is it a sin to wish that I were mad? if it be, it is a sin to wish for happiness, for if I were mad, I must be happy, for I know I should then think myself the husband of Margarétta.

But you know not yet how Antonia was actuated in her villainous and but too successful conduct towards me, and therefore her acts as yet appear to you a mystery. The packet which she put into my hands on the morning of our arriving in Venice contains the secret history of her arts; I here transcribe it for your perusal.

The confessions of Antonia.

WHEN you read these lines the wretch who wrote them will be suffering those tortures which religion has denounced against the crimes she had committed; she is conscious that she must expiate in everlasting fire the actions of her present life,
yet

yet so acute are the pangs of her insulted heart, that she accepts future torture as the well-known consequence of the extacy of revenge in this. If the confessions of a heart rent by these intolerable agonies do not tempt you to pity a sufferer past the hope of mercy at least let them induce you to forgive her having sinned against yourself.

My father was a decayed noble, who died before I had seen the light; one month after his death my mother gave birth to my sister Laura and myself, who am named Antonia. Our entrance into the world proved death to her who bore us, and we were orphans on the first day of our existence. From the moment of our birth, the similarity of our persons was so great, that the woman who nursed us was obliged to tie a ribbon round my neck, who was the elder born, as a mark by which to distinguish me from my sister. Our only relations were a maiden sister of my mother's, and a sister of my father's who was a widow; the former was with my mother at the time of her death, and she immediately summoned the latter to the house of their deceased relative, that they might together consult how to dispose of their orphan neices. The property which my father had left was very slender, for his pride had been very great, and he had lived far beyond the ability of his purse, insomuch, that I have since heard it declared, it was fortunate for his children that he died when he did, for had he lived half a year longer, both himself and us would have been reduced to beggary. My father's sister had five children of her own, thus, as might be expected, *she* ~~we~~ made objections to increasing her family by taking us into; my mother's sister therefore consented to take our little property into her own hands, and to bring us up in her own house, as well as the junction of her possessions and ours would permit her to do.

This

This aunt resided in Venice, and accordingly when we were old enough to travel she took us thither with her.

As we had grew up the strong resemblance which we had borne to each other from the first moment of our birth continued to strengthen with our years, and those only who were very intimately acquainted with us could distinguish us from each other. But, similar as we were in our persons, our dispositions did not in the least assimilate. Laura's temper was extremely mild, and her tones persuasive; mine was warm, and my lips loved to utter commands. Our minds were alike cultivated; but Laura was diffident of the knowledge and accomplishments which she possessed, I was eager in seeking opportunities of displaying mine. Laura was unmoved by the voice of flattery; in me, it could sooth every pain and awaken transporting pleasure: Laura received coolly the attentions of the other sex; I threw myself into the way of attracting them, for they were my highest enjoyment.

For the first sixteen years of my life nothing occurred to me but such accidents as have happened to almost every girl with a tolerably handsome person, and are therefore not worth relating; on the very day on which I completed my seventeenth year—fatal day to my peace! I saw, for the first time saw, the Marchese di Marvaldi, in the church of Saint John.

Albert di Marvaldi was just returned from his travels, he was three years older than myself, and his face, besides wearing the expression of an intelligent mind, glowed with manly beauty, so that a first sight lighted up for him the flame of passion in my heart. During vespers my eyes were constantly passing over every part of his countenance and person; whether they told him the secret of my heart I know not, but he appeared to receive my

my glances with pleasure, and no sooner was the service of the church ended, than he came round to that part where my aunt and myself were sitting, and entered into conversation with us : when we left the church he continued to walk with us, and when we entered the house he left us, for my aunt's prudence, as she called the coldness of her own age, did not suffer her to ask him to go in with us.

The Marchese di Marvaldi was, like myself, an orphan; he was possessed of a very handsome property, and was just come to Venice to inhabit the mansion of his ancestors.

I had already been honoured with many admirers, and I had fancied for a time that I had loved several of them by turns, but the sensations with which Albert di Marvaldi had inspired me soon explained to me that my former ideas of love had been false.

It is not my intention to dwell upon any event of my life longer than it is absolutely necessary for me to do, in order to shew you the connection of those accidents and disappointments which have driven my insulted heart to seek revenge, even though bought by its ultimate torture.

Upon this principle, suffice it to say, that if the Marchese di Marvaldi did not at first understand the feelings of my heart, he soon learnt to define them through the interpretation of my eyes, for before the end of a fortnight he put a note into my hand, as we were leaving the church, saying, that he flattered himself he had won my good opinion, and should call upon my aunt on the following morning, to ask the honour of my hand in marriage.

I was almost transported, raving with joy; not only that I really felt the height of passion for the Marchese, but pride also assisted in raising my transports.

transports. I was the daughter of a decayed noble, I inherited all his spirit of family hauteur, but my circumstances were such, that I had never hoped for, much less aspired to, a connection answerable to my birth; and now, in the very man whose person I most admired, were combined both family, power, and fortune! The mansion of the Marchese was one of the most noble in Venice, his establishment one of the richest, his gondolas and carriages the most expensive and beautiful, and himself the very man whom I should have selected from the rest of the world, even though not possessed of a single one of these luxuries. Oh, had I then known what would have been the event of this momentary happiness! Oh, had I then died!—but I am content to have lived, and to have lived a wretch, for I should not else have tasted the sweets of revenge.

Agreeably to his appointment, the Marchese came on the following morning, and was most graciously received by my aunt, now she knew his intentions to be honourable, as she expressed herself. Few words serve to determine a matter of love to which the minds of both parties are inclined; thus it was with Albert and myself, and I passed three hours in his society that morning in the enviable state of his future wife.

The greater part of his time was now spent at the house of my aunt; whenever I went to the church, or to the opera, he was my constant attendant, and I felt my love increase for him to an excess which I could not hide from him; and he appeared the most happy of men.

It had been agreed that our marriage should be solemnised at the distance of three months from the Marchese's first offer of his hand to me; two months of that time were now passed, and my sister, who was on a visit to her paternal aunt in
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the country, was recalled to Venice. to be present at the nuptials.—And from the moment of her return begins the date of my misery.

False, perjured, base, unfeeling, inhuman Albert di Marvaldi ! no sooner did he behold my sister Laura, than that heart, which had so long and with so many vows of eternal fidelity been given to me, began to withdraw itself from my bosom, and to creep into the breast of my happy sister. Yes, after all his sacred protestations, all his appeals to Heaven to witness his faith, and all the raptures he had expressed—so often expressed, at the anticipated consummation of our marriage, he ceased to love me ; but I, even in my revenge, cannot cease to love him ; it is the excess of my love for him, that spurs me on to become his assassin !

My first apprehension of his baseness was one morning when the day appointed for our marriage was fast approaching, he came to my apartment and for some trifling reason desired the nuptials to be deferred for some time longer. I thought this a strange request, from a young man so passionately in love as I had ever thought him to be ; I however judged that there must be some necessity for the protraction of our marriage with which I was not acquainted, and I felt tolerably satisfied, till going in the evening of that very day into the garden adjoining to the house of my aunt, I saw in an arbour at the farther end of a walk, along which I was moving, the deceitful Marchese di Marvaldi seated by my perfidious sister Laura, and holding in his hand one of her's.

They saw me not at first, I stopped, and felt as if I were sinking into the earth ; in a few moments Laura raised her eyes and beheld me ; she spoke to Albert, and they both rose with the confusion of interrupted love on their faces. I advanced

vanced towards them, and, in a voice animated by the indignation of my feelings, I upbraided Albert with his perfidy, and Laura with her injustice in stealing away the acknowledged husband of her sister.

Laura burst into tears, and seemed anxious to say something which her tears prevented her from uttering.

The Marchese besought Laura to go into the house, and requested me to return with him into the arbour; Laura obeyed his request, and I was not yet sufficiently convinced that my suspicions were just, to refuse him a hearing.

Oh great God! what a veil of happiness did he then draw from before my clouded eyes!—he confessed to me that he had seen my sister Laura, while on a visit to her paternal aunt, that he had made acquaintance with her, and that they had already begun to interchange looks of tenderness when he had been called on some matter of importance to Venice, whither he had understood she was soon to follow him, and where he meant to make her an offer of his hand; that on seeing me in the church of Saint John, my great resemblance to my sister had deceived him, and that he had supposed me to be the same girl whom he had seen and admired in the village of F——, and that he did not discover his error till my sister returned to Venice, and he saw us together. “Hence,” said he, has arisen an unfortunate mistake, for which I know not how to atone to you, and which my aversion to communicate to you has for some days past rendered me very unhappy; I am bound in honour to espouse your sister, as my first advances were made to her, but,” continued he, “you shall not suffer from my error, I will endeavour to procure you a connection not inferior to the one you have expected, by giving you a fortune which shall command such a one for you.”

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The sudden turn given to my feelings by the disappointment of my passion, and the overthrow of my future prospects, fired my blood to madness; I threw myself upon the ground, raved, shrieked, cursed Albert and myself, called upon Heaven to strike him dead before me; and lastly I wept that no immediate revenge presented itself to my ready hand.

As my extacy of rage dissolved itself a little in tears, my reason became clearer, and I saw my sister and aunt coming towards us from the house; my shrieks, I suppose, had called them out.

Still I was upon the ground; my sister came and endeavoured to me; she appeared alarmed at my situation, and said, "Albert shall be your husband."—"Impossible," said he, "I am your's by the justice of first affections."—"If it must be so," returned Laura, "promise again to be a friend to my sister." At these words I started up, they recalled to me the promise with which the Marchese had ended his explanation. "Insulting wretches!" I exclaimed, "think you that your vile gold, and your more detested friendship, will be accepted by me!—me whom you have combined to distract, to torture, to deceive—no! before I acknowledge your friendship, every breathing thing upon the earth shall be my foe; and before I accept your gold—your kindness, as you call it—I will beg, starve, rot! One word more and I trouble you no longer; only bear in your mind this admonition:—that by my soul I swear, your smiles of pleasure shall be turned into agony!" Having said this, I ran into the house, gained my chamber, shut myself within it, and resolved to leave it no more till Laura was the Marchesa di Marvaldi; my passions were strong, but they easily yielded to each other, and anger now gave way to the anticipated pleasure of revenge, though I had not yet digested any plan for obtaining it.

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I continued resolute in not leaving my chamber nor admitting any one into it, except a female servant to whom I was partial. My sister Laura and the Marchese came repeatedly to my door and implored admittance, or at least that I would listen to them while they addressed me, and answer them from within : but I did not suffer even a monosyllable to pass my lips : they both wrote to me, imploring me to say how they could make me happy ; my sister also addressed me a private letter, in which she told me, that she would still refuse to marry the Marchese di Marvaldi, if her remaining single would be any satisfaction to my mind. Heaven and Hell should not *now* have persuaded me to marry the Marchese myself, after the slight I had received from him, had he even fallen on his knees to implore my hand ; however, it was not probable that he would ever wish to make me his wife, even if my sister refused to unite herself with him, and accordingly I determined to look forward only to that passion which is stronger than love.

After I had confined myself a month to my chamber, and had received repeated letters from them both, declaring that they would never marry without my consent, I wrote a note, which I directed to them jointly, and in which were only these words :

“ I wish you to marry.”

A few minutes after I had sent this note I received one from them, wherein they requested that I would complete their happiness by once again entering into their society, to this I returned an answer :

“ When you are united I will mix again with the world.”

Presently after came a third supplication, to desire that I would be present at their nuptials ; and to this I replied :

“ You

"*You shall see me on the day of your marriage.*"

From the two last enquiries I perfectly understood that they thought me reconciled to seeing my sister the Marchesa di Marvaldi, and imagined that I only kept myself a prisoner in my chamber till the indissoluble knot should be tied between them, and I made my answers purposely equivocal to retain them in their error, as on their union depended all my self-promised revenge.

On the evening previous to the day upon which they were to be united, the female servant whom I alone admitted into my apartment came to inform me what was to be the event of the morrow, and to request in the joint names of Albert and Laura that they might see me that evening; I told the woman who brought me this message to say, "that they should see me on the morrow, and not till then."

When the morning arrived, I habited myself only in the same clothes which I had worn during the preceding week, and without a single ornament about my dress to compliment the wedding of this perfidious lover and inhuman sister: I sat down, in a state of mind which I know not better how to express than by calling it a composed madness, to await the summons for accompanying them to church. At length it was brought to the outside of my door by my aunt; I enquired to what church they were going? she told me that of Saint John; I requested that they would proceed, and promised immediately to follow them.

My aunt went down with my message, and shortly after returned to say, that they wished me to go with them; I answered that I promised to follow, but would not go with them.

They knew me to be resolute, and accordingly they set out without me.

Immediately on their being gone, I threw a thick veil over my head, went down into the street,

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street, and proceeded by a different way to that which I knew they had taken to the cloisters of Saint John ; I stole along them till I gained a little door which opens into the church on one side of the altar, I slid through it, and took my station behind a bulky pillar, at the moment they entered the church on the other side ; here I stood entirely free from observation, and here, in the very church where the base Albert had first met and returned my glances of love, I saw him united to my unfeeling sister.

When the ceremony was concluded, the Marchese kissed the lips of his wife ; I thank Heaven that he did so ; the power of giving pleasure which those lips possessed I knew to be mine in equity, and I burnt to taste the delight they were capable of giving ; to see another revel in the joys I languished for, was more than I could bear, it roused my spirit to the pitch up to which I wished it to be screwed, and throwing up my veil, I dashed towards the altar. On seeing me, they both stepped forward ; and extended their hands to take mine. “ Forbear, inhuman wretches ! ” I cried ; “ pollute not my hand by the perjured touch of yours ; I come not hither to meet your hated forms on terms of amity ; touch me not, I charge ye ; you have just pledged a vow at this altar, I come to pledge one also ” I threw myself upon my knees before the altar, kissed the crucifix which was placed upon it, then said : “ I swear by some immediate action of my life to bring disgrace upon the family of the Marchese di Marvaldi ; I swear, if the most deceitful arts can accomplish my wish, to marry a man equal in rank to Albert di Marvaldi ; and I swear, when this darling wish of my soul shall be effected, that his happiness shall not outlive my triumph ;—all this I swear to perform, though at the hazard of my

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everlasting

everlasting soul." Having said this, I rose from the altar, darted at them a mingled look of indignation, contempt, and fury, and left the church. Whether all the words of my vow, or indeed any part of it, was audible to them, I am not able to determine, for the agony passing in my heart rendered it difficult to me to articulate. On arriving in the cloisters, I pulled down my veil, returned by the shortest way to the house of my aunt, and again locked myself into my chamber.

You will, perhaps, be surprised that I did not in the church take the revenge of his life upon the Marchese, as you have now seen me sufficiently desperate to do it; but my triumph would not then have been complete; I should not have tortured him with the disgrace of a family which had hitherto not been stained with a spot of infamy, or should I have shewn that I could through my own means connect myself with a man his equal in rank and fortune, without being indebted for the connection to the pittance which he insultingly had offered to me; at that moment my revenge would not have been full, and therefore, to me, no revenge.

The nuptials were celebrated at the mansion of the Marchese; and my aunt came to me after I had been returned home about two hours, to enquire why I had not gone to the house of joy, as I had promised Albert and my sister that they should see me on the day of their marriage? From this message I began to conclude that they had not heard my vow at the altar; I did not think it necessary to repeat it, and only answered, "I have kept my promise, they have seen me on the day of their marriage; tell them this, and also tell them to urge me no more to enter their presence, for we meet but once again!"

My aunt seemed to understand these words differently to what they were meant to convey; she thought

thought them, I believe, to allude to a future state. She did not attempt to argue with me, for she knew the firmness of my temper; she knew also the aggravations I had received for forming my present resolution, and left me to return to the house of the Marchese.

I doubt not that the day I passed was happier than that either of Albert or Laura. I was contemplating the future atonement of my wrongs; I was enjoying the satisfaction of a wretch who, on the wings of vengeance, was towering above her disappointments; it is the most decided feeling which sense can taste.

In the course of the same week I had resolved to leave the house of my aunt: I knew that Laura would be frequently visiting it, and I determined not to subject myself to the hated sight of her presence. On the very morning on which I had predetermined to depart from it, the female servant who attended me came into my chamber, and told me that she had found my aunt lifeless in her bed. I heard the event unmoved; my heart was not in a state to be touched with the common occurrences of life. I still, however, felt sufficient interest in her fate to wish to ascertain whether her death had been a natural one, and I sent for a physician to inform me on this point. He satisfied me by declaring a fit to have been the cause of her death, and I now experienced some slight pleasure at her being no more; for she had been to me affectionate and indulgent, and I did rejoice that she was spared the pain of witnessing the future events of my life. I next summoned a lawyer, and, in his presence, opened her will; she had equally shared between Laura and myself what little property she died possessed of. I immediately made the division, even to the splitting of a straw, that it might never be said the poor An-

tonia had defrauded of a pin's point the rich Laura, who had offered her pittance to buy her a husband.

You will not be surprised that I was scrupulously honest at the very moment that I was seeking an opportunity of performing a most atrocious crime. You must have seen enough of this world to have observed that every one who inhabits it is made up of contradictions, that every individual being looks forward to some purpose which, tho' he knows it to be of a criminal nature, he has not the resolution to forego, and that he equally binds himself down to the performance of other virtues with strictness.

A short time after the death of my aunt, I began to enter into a course of gaiety and dissipation, which I had fixed upon as the first steps towards accomplishing my deep laid scheme of revenge. I went constantly to the theatres alone, and before I had been in them many minutes, I was certain of being attended by a swarm of those young men who hold themselves ready to pay their attentions to any woman willing to receive them. By my being seen alone, or at least without any female companion, in a theatre, when my sister and her husband were perhaps on the contrary side of the same house, or at least in some other place of public amusement, the report of my disappointment, and my subsequent enmity to my sister and Albert, began to be spread very largely about. Some of graver years, in both sexes, took part against me for persisting to maintain a constant enmity against a man whose conduct had originated from error, not design. The younger women were, as they always are, in a conspiracy against one who has any charms of person which may vie with their own; but the young men flattered, caressed, and encouraged me in my determined animosity against the Marchese and his wife. These marks of their approbation

approbation were exactly what I desired. I gave them frequent invitations to visit me; free access to the house of a single woman is never disregarded by a man who devotes his life to a fashionable pleasure, and in a few months my house became the constant assemblage of the gay young men of the time.

The appearance of doing wrong is as injurious to a female character, in the eyes and opinion of the world, as the actual commission, and my reputation already began to be tarnished by the tongue of calumny.

At this time I received a letter from my sister, wherein she entreated me to receive her protection and admonished me, if I continued firm against reuniting myself with her upon the terms of friendship, to be careful of my own fame, which had suffered greatly in the estimation of the world at large. I returned no answer to this petition:—the stigma of the world I was labouring to gain.

Thus passed a few months, till my slender finances were entirely exhausted by the dissipation in which I had lived, and the entertainments I had so profusely given. The time of my first willing degradation was now fast approaching; it was a degradation which I had resolved, nay vowed, to undergo; and yet, as the moment which made it necessary continued to advance more pressingly upon me, I could not forbear recoiling at the terrific idea.

My late levity of conduct had given me many admirers, who had not scrupled to make me pecuniary offers for my caresses. I loved none of them, and, therefore, was undecided on whom to fix the honour of my disgrace.

The Marchese di Marvaldi had, during his travels, spent much of his time at the court of France; he had there seen many Englishmen,
and

and, from the noble conduct of one of them, with whom he had been engaged in an affair of honour, he had imbibed the highest opinion for Englishmen in general, and given a pressing invitation to those whom he had known in that kingdom to visit him whenever their pursuits might lead them to Venice.

The Marchese had been married about seven months to Laura, when I was informed that an English nobleman, who had been some time in France with his sister, in the hope of benefiting her health, not having received the expected success from the climate, was come with her into the still serener atmosphere of Italy, and had taken up his residence in the Pallazo di Marvaldi. I farther understood that the Marchese and he had passed some time together in France; and at that moment I thought no more of what I had heard.

About a fortnight after this I one day saw an Englishman walking in the place of Saint Mark with Laura and her husband; I just cast my eyes upon him, and he appeared to me of about forty years of age, of a handsome countenance and good figure. In the evening of the same day, one of my constant attendants at the opera said to me, "I have promised to introduce a stranger to your table this evening; have I your leave?"—

"Who is it!" I asked. "The English nobleman," he replied, "who is now with his sister upon a visit to the Marchese di Marvaldi. He has seen you several times, and is desirous of being acquainted with you; but he comes unknown to your brother and Laura; for as he and his sister are both receiving civilities from the Marchese and his wife, he thinks it would appear unhand-some conduct to them, were he openly to visit you, with whom they are upon terms of enmity."

I returned home after the play, and in a short time the young Italian followed me, bringing with him

him the Englishman whom I had seen in the morning walking in the square of Saint Mark, and whom he introduced to me as Sir Robert Seymour.

Pardon me, my dear George, that the exact truth which the nature of our friendship demands reciprocally from us, in reciting the occurrences that befall our lives, will not permit me to hide this foible of your parent, which, as a father, he judged rightly in veiling from you; for *your father* undoubtedly was the Sir Robert Seymour here alluded to by Antonia. You cannot require to be reminded of his having gone abroad at the period herein mentioned with his sister, Mrs. Woodville, for the benefit of her health. I shall wave all farther comments on this discovery for the present, and proceed in copying the narrative which has divulged it; thus it proceeds:

I shall be very brief in disclosing to you transactions which it gives me no satisfaction to dwell upon, and which it can afford you no pleasure to read. I gathered from the conversation and manners of Sir Robert Seymour that he was a man of gallantry. He soon found an opportunity of seeing me alone, and revealed to me the reason of his having desired my acquaintance: his bribes to infamy were liberal; they enabled me to live in that style of affluence which I wished to show my sister and her husband I could support without their assistance; and, in a short time, a still more extraordinary, but not less ardent, wish of mine was accomplished—for I felt myself about to become a mother.

When I was advanced four months in my pregnancy, I declared my situation to Sir Robert; for he was on the point of leaving Venice for Nice in compliance with the prescription of the physician, who had recommended a change of air to his sister.

My

My situation I found to be what he neither wished nor expected; however he behaved with the generosity of a man of honour, and promised to provide for my child, by taking it to England with him, when he should return thither. He advised me immediately to leave Venice, and endeavour to hide my condition from the world: this it was not my wish to do; I therefore returned evasive answers, the sum of which meant, that I chose to remain in the place where I was. He appeared uneasy at finding this to be my determination, and, after some hesitation, he besought me never to let it be known who was the father of my child, as it would give the utmost pain to have the Marchese Albert acquainted that he had been guilty of so great a breach of hospitality, as he conceived to be a connection with the sister of a man from whom he had been receiving so great civilities as he had experienced from the Marchese di Marvaldi, even though an enmity subsisted between us, and I had thrown myself into his way.

My sole object was, that the Marchese should feel the humiliation of knowing the sister of his wife to be the mother of an illegitimate child; thus it was of no consequence to me to divulge who was the father, and I readily agreed to conceal that circumstance.

A few days after this conversation, Sir Robert Seymour left Venice, it having been predetermined between us that when my child was born I should write to inform him of it, and that he would then, if possible, come himself to fetch it away, at all events, would send a trusty dependent to convey it to England.

It was not long before the fame of my condition began to be spread abroad, and I then received a second letter from my sister, wherein she lamented

ed my fall from virtue, and implored me to fly to some place where I was not known. I treated this letter like the former one, with the contempt of not acknowledging the receipt.

About a week before the time at which I awaited the birth of my infant, Sir Robert, whose sister had paid the debt of nature, returned to Venice, under pretence of bidding farewell to the Marchese di Marvaldi, in fact, to hear some tidings of me. The evening before my confinement he visited me; during his stay with me, he said, "Antonia, I love you, and nothing but the fear of losing both the affection and respect of two sons, whom I have in England, prevents me from making you my wife; that, however, cannot be, from the reason I have already stated; but every thing else which it is in my power to do, to render you happy, you may command. Do you prefer to be yourself the protectress of the child, which is yet unborn? or do you wish me to convey it under my own care to England?" My vow made it uncertain how long I might be an inhabitant of this world; I accordingly answered, "I wish it to be under your care." He then told me that he should leave Venice immediately on the child's entrance into life, and that he had provided a woman to nurse it on its journey. He next presented me with a sum of money, which he told me was to buy comfort during my confinement for myself; and much, much was it beyond what I expected from him: he then bade me good-night. This was the last time I ever saw him.—I believe he loved me, but obliged himself not to see me again, from a conviction of the injustice his visits to me were doing to his sons. On the succeeding morning I gave birth to a girl, who was named Amilia; notice of her birth was directly carried to Sir Robert, and she was that afternoon conveyed from me for ever.

This, Sir Charles, explains what appeared to you a mystery, when I told you that I had not embraced my child since the day of her birth: you thought me then the mother of Paulina.

In a very short time the birth of my child was blazed all over Venice; it was even confidently asserted who was the father, and I was credibly informed that the Marchese Albert himself knew who was the parent; but the child was said to be dead.

I saw with joy, the first part of my vow accomplished; the stigma of infamy which I wished to fix upon the Marchese by my conduct the tongue of the world was as ready as I could desire it to be in placing upon him, and his name was now scarcely ever mentioned without it being added with a sneer, 'His wife is sister to that Antonia who has disgraced herself and her family by bearing a child.' Now did I begin to triumph; now did the Marchese's smiles of pleasure, as I had foretold they should, begin to be turned into frowns of agony. You are aware, like myself, that the disgrace of being a mother, unmarried, in reason falls only upon her who bears it; but the world at large delights to find false pleas for insulting its neighbours, and always takes care to give the innocent family a share of the stigma.— Upon this acquaintance with the ill nature of the world I acted, and I found the assurance I had placed upon it not ill founded. At first it fell strongly indeed upon the Marchese, and it is not worn away even to this day. What has thus long continued Paulina without the offer of the hand of a single Italian noble—what but that her aunt Antonia bore a bastard?

Here, George, I must again interrupt the narrative of Antonia, to make some observations which

which have perhaps already appeared to you.—
Do you now not perceive what meaning lurked beneath the Count di Rebini's tongue, when he said, 'Paulina is a fine girl, and her father is possessed of a handsome fortune, but yet she is not the woman whom every man would choose to make his wife?' Is it not also obvious what was the secret he was about to disclose to me in our walk on St. Mark's place, when the Marchese di Malvardi interrupted our conversation? Does not likewise the reason plainly appear why the Marchese, with so great confusion, and yet so great earnestness, made me an offer of his daughter in marriage? Oh, what a disgrace has this Antonia been to her sex! what a scourge to the peace of those with whom she has been fated to live! Methinks to her the pictured mother of Hamlet was an angel, and that to express her enormities, Shakspeare would have converted his comparatively weak apostrophe of 'Frailty, thy name is woman,' into 'Devil, thy name is woman!'

Her account of herself continues thus :

For some time no occurrence worth my relating happened; I continued to recover gradually from my lying in, and Laura gave birth to her daughter Paulina. When I became restored to my health, I went very little from home, and received visits from but few of my former intimates: I pretended to appear repentant for what I had done. It was necessary that my conduct should now change, or I could never have the faintest chance of forming an union to absolve me from the second part of my vow; all my hopes rested now on my being able to inveigle some stranger or foreigner into my snares.

At the expiration of two months the nurse who had accompanied Sir Robert to England with my child

child returned. I learnt from her that it was well, and that its father appeared to have some affection for it. I had understood from him, at our last parting, though he had absolutely expressed it, that he did not intend me ever again to see my child, and that I was not to expect, in future, to receive either letters or presents from him; and I had received the intelligence with that indifference with which secondary concerns are always listened to, when one principal object occupies the mind.

Towards the second year after my becoming a mother, I learnt from a young Italian, who had always been in the habit of frequenting my house, and who was now just returned from passing some months in England, that Sir Robert Seymour had died during his stay in the kingdom. I asked after my child; he told me that he had made some private enquiries about it, and that he had been assured it was dead also. I received these tidings without either painful or pleasurable emotions.

Not long after this time, I was one day sitting alone in my chamber, when my servant informed me, that an old man of a decent appearance wished to speak to me. I admitted the petitioner to see me, and, to my surprise, recognised in the person of him who entered my apartment an old servant of my deceased father named Bernardo.

His services to my father had been most faithful; he lived with my mother at the time of my birth: I had seen him frequently since her death; for he had lived in the service of a noble man in the same village, to which I had often gone to visit my paternal aunt. He had always expressed much affection for the daughters of his deceased master: I knew his words to express the real feelings of his heart, and I received him with great cordiality.

It was a long time before he could speak. I was surprised by his embarrassment. At length he gained the power of utterance, and told me he had quitted his last service, that he had come to Venice to seek a new one, and that chance had directed him to the Marchese di Marvaldi, that he had there obtained the place of major-domo ; "but I am not happy," added he, "for I have heard so sad a tale about you, my dear lady—" Here he burst into tears.

I made him sit down by me, expressed my satisfaction at seeing him again, and then, in my turn, told him a tale of what I had undergone from the disappointment of my love for the Marchese calculated to soften his heart in my favour.

When I had concluded it, he sat some time in silence ; he appeared half convinced of my wrongs, and yet not satisfied with me. "Do not you pity me ?" I said. "The child," returned he—"the child !" I understood his meaning, and instead of attempting to exculpate himself, I chose the more politic method of describing my sorrow, my repentance, and my present seclusion from gaiety. At length I brought him over to pity me ; and when he went away, I made him promise to come frequently and sit with me.

I already felt a plan by which it might be in his power to assist me in performing my second vow dancing in my brain ; but I resolved that it would be prudent to let many months pass before I ventured even to hint it to him.

My sister and myself had been always much admired by the English who had travelled through Italy ; Sir Robert Seymour's attachment to me was a sign of their approbation ; and I learnt from my confidants that every Englishman who had visited at the Pallazo di Marvaldi expressed much more than common praise of Laura's person and figure.

I had

I had a faint glimmering of some advantage which might result to me from our resemblance, but I could not yet form any distinct idea of how it was to be effected. One point, however, I felt necessary carefully to attend to, that I should keep myself secluded from the world, as nothing could promote the success of such a deceit, if I ever should find it convenient to practise it, so much as keeping myself from observation, and by the same reason from being spoken of.

Bernardo continued to visit me once every month, and sometimes oftener; but two years had tediously rolled away before I believed the old man to be sufficiently convinced of my pretended resolution to walk no more in the paths of vice, to be induced to assist me in any plan for promoting the happiness of my future days. I then ventured to begin the subject; I talked to him of the married felicity of my sister, how unjustly she had acquired it, and how injuriously I had been treated. His answer only was, that the Marchese had fallen into an error, into which the great resemblance between Laura and myself had induced him: that it had not been a willing insult offered by him to me; and that he had been desirous of making me any recompence in his power.

"It is the wish of my heart," said I, "to marry; I desire to become the wife of some man who has sufficient generosity to espouse a woman who cannot enrich him, and who would place me in a situation that would not disgrace the family from which I am descended." Bernardo smiled, and, it was evident, at the vanity of my wish. I continued: "With an Italian this can never be the case; but could I be so happy as to please some man who did not know the circumstances of my past life——" —"Would you conceal them from one who might ask your hand?" Bernardo interrupted

interrupted me by saying. "It is a justice I owe to myself," I replied, "I have already said that I can never marry an Italian, thus to whatever other country my husband may convey me, my ill fame, I trust, will not travel after me to interrupt our happiness."—"It would travel with you in your heart," said Bernardo. "I think I must have suffered enough to quell its envious spirit," I returned. Here ended our first conversation on this subject; it had been short, and I augured but little advantage from it, nor did I venture in some time to renew it.

At a distant period I again introduced it; "How many men" said I, "as I am told, are there of all countries, but particularly Englishmen, who envy the Marchese di Marvaldi his wife!" The Marchesa is certainly very much admired," returned Bernardo. "Am I still very much like her?" I asked. "As much as ever," replied Bernardo; "if you are at all different, it is that you are rather thinner."—"If Laura were single then you think she would not be long without a husband?" I rejoined. "Indeed I do not," was his answer. "I think," said I, "that the admiration which is bestowed on *her*, might be turned to *my* advantage."—"How so?" he asked. "I am of opinion," replied I, forcing a smile, under which I intended to couch my meaning in the guise of a joke, till I observed how it was taken by him—"I am of opinion, that if I were by accident to fall in the way of one of the admirers of my sister, who is sighing in vain for her, that the very surprise of being able to obtain an exact resemblance of the woman he had been adoring, as an unattainable creature, would convert him into my husband."—"If you met him on terms of honour and truth," said Bernardo, "I see no harm in the trial." This was much
 farther

farther than I had expected to get with him, and I immediately exclaimed, "Give me the opportunity."—"I will think upon it," returned Bernardo; and here again ended our conversation.

A few days after, Bernardo sent me a note in which were these words:—

"MY dear lady, I have thought again and again upon the discourse which passed between us not long since. I feel pity for the situation to which you have imprudently reduced yourself; I have related all that has passed between us to the Marchese my master and your sister Laura, and with the utmost tenderness they offer to forget all that is passed, and to receive you into their house as their sister. I am yours faithfully.

"BERNARDO."

I threw the letter upon the floor, and crushed it under my feet; I felt all my hopes destroyed by this old fool's babbling. When my rage began a little to subside, I took my pen and wrote thus to Bernardo:—

"If Albert and Laura can forget all that is past, Antonia cannot, nor will she on any emergency become beholden to them."

Three months passed away and Bernardo came no more to visit me. Three months were added to the first, and I saw him not. I knew he was still alive, and therefore had no hesitation in determining that he had caught offence at the indignant style of my note; I scorned to sue him, so endeavoured to forget that I had ever hoped any thing through him. But a worse evil was hastening upon me; I had hitherto lived upon the liberal present of Sir Robert Seymour; it was now almost wasted, and I saw no resource before me.

After many debates with myself, I resolved to go to Rome, where I was not known, and practise every art that might gain me my desired end,
but

but I was aware that without an accomplice little could be done. I knew a young man in Venice, whom once had been a servant to a nobleman that had visited my house during the life-time of my aunt. The conversation to which I had often been witness during the first few months after her death, from the riotous society whom I had encouraged to frequent my table, had taught me that this man, whose name was Marco, had been discharged from his master's service for a theft of which he was well known to be guilty, but which could not be proved against him; had since that time entered into the service of a cyprian for no very creditable purposes; and had been suspected of handling with expertness a stiletto.

Pity me, if you have a heart, for I was now falling, the victim of revenge, into the most abject, the most contemptible of vices.

I sent to request to see this man; he came to me; I offered him a handsome pay to enter into my service, and he immediately agreed to meet me at Rome in the course of a fortnight, where he was to pass for the Count di Barmia and my brother. He promised me his secrecy, and I believe in that he kept his word.

I shall not trouble you to follow me through twelve long and painful years, which were passed in Rome and other places in Italy with this man, in the unsuccessful attempt of performing the second part of my vow, and thus bringing on the conclusion of my miserable life. Let it be enough for me to say, that having once made this man my confidant, my person was a sacrifice I could not withhold from him; and that as our enterprise failed of accomplishment, his loathed embraces were not the only ones to which I was forced to yield for subsistence. But still, notwithstanding the accumulated wretchedness of
mind

mind and body to which I was exposed, revenge burnt with unabated desire in my breast, and I would sooner have met with a death of hunger, pain, and sickness, than to have taken the smallest relief from the detested Albert and his wife.----- And yet how excessively did I love him ! for there was not one caress which I constrained myself to suffer from those I loathed, which I would not have thought worthy the barter of Paradise from Albert di Marvaldi !

Almost forlorn in hope from the want of success which had attended my numerous trials to obtain such a husband as I desired, I determined once more to return to Venice, and as my last resource to make some attempt wherein I should be assisted by my resemblance to Laura. I informed Marco of my plan ; we accordingly went in disguise to an obscure lodging, and he was then to make it his immediate business to discover what was passing in the house of the Marchese di Marvaldi. Fortune this once smiled on his attempts ; a servant had just been discharged from the Pallazo di Marvaldi, and Marco, by his address, contrived to get himself engaged in the place.

Marco had resided only two days in the service of the Marchese, when he came to inform me, that there was now in Venice a young Englishman, named Sir Charles Melford, who was frequently visiting the Marchese, and appeared much struck with the person of the Marchesa.

Hope now began to revive.

On the following day Marco again came to me ; " The young Englishman is deeply in love," said he : " Bernardo, little suspecting before whom he was speaking, has just been saying, that he has observed Sir Charles Melford standing this morning before the portrait of the Marchesa, and contemplating it in an ecstacy of delight ; he exclaimed,

claimed, Bernardo says, as he viewed it, 'What an enchanting woman!' " I enquired of Marco where this Sir Charles was generally to be seen in an evening; he told me on the square of St. Mark.

About nine in the evening I repaired to the place he had mentioned, and was there met by my confidant, who pointed you out to me, and then left me. You were walking with the Marquis de Belleterre. I had previously masked myself; and when we met in the walk, I faltered in my pace, and said in a low voice, " Signor Inglese;" you cast your eyes for a moment upon me, but went on; the Marquis came running towards me, but I avoided him, and went home, lest he should again attempt to join me, and what I most dreaded, a detection of who I really was should ensue.

In the afternoon of the next day, Marco again came to my lodgings; he told me that the Marchese, the Marchesa, and their daughter Paulina, were gone by appointment to pass the day at the Count di P—'s, at some distance from Venice, and that you were engaged to dine with the Marquis de Belleterre: Englishmen," continued he, " drink freely in company; Sir Charles will this evening be at least warm, if not elevated by wine, and those are the moments when men listen most willingly to the whispers of love: speak to him again, if possible; insist upon his attending to you. And that you may not during your conversation be subject to public observation, I have stolen for you the key of the Marchesa's cassino, into which you may invite Sir Charles without fear, as the Marvaldi family are all from home, and your going into the cassino will not only insure your conversation not being overheard, but will give you an indisputable appearance of being the Marchesa Laura herself."

The

The occurrences of that evening I need not repeat to you, nor need I explain to you why I bound you by so solemn a vow never to be the first to speak upon our meeting of that night.

I begged your purse not only from urgent necessity, but also to raise your pity in my behalf, as my appearing to you to be reduced to ask it, would either lead you, I thought, to entertain a mean or cruel opinion of the Marchese, whom you supposed to be my husband.

Having once admitted you to the freedom which at our first interview had passed between us, and learning from the observant Marco, that your eyes betrayed the most vivid warmth of affection every time they gazed upon the Marchesa, I determined to see you no more in Venice, but to raise your passion for me, by disappointing you of those pleasures which you had once enjoyed; I saw this to be my only chance for securing you as my husband.

When you were about to leave Venice, I learnt from Marco, who had now become intimate with your servant, which way you were to travel. The letter which you must recollect to have received from me when you were on the point of leaving Venice, I had previously prepared, and Marco by his adroitness, prevailed on old Bernardo to take it to you masked, telling him it was a letter of importance which he had been entrusted with for you by the Marquis de Belleterre, and which he had a particular reason for not delivering himself. The honest Bernardo, ever willing to serve his comrades, readily consented to carry the letter, and return its answer to Marco. My object in making Bernardo the carrier of this letter was, that I hoped, although masked, his figure would betray him to your servant; that he would naturally communicate to you his discovery;

ry; and that you would be induced still more than ever to pity me, when you learnt so worthy an old man as Bernardo to be the patron of my misfortunes. My letter to you answered the double purpose for which I sent it;—to keep alive the passion with which my sister had inspired you, and to supply me with a sum of money for my present exigencies.

The day after that on which you left Venice I quitted it, and without leaving behind me a single suspicion of my having visited it. Marco—I thought it most prudent to leave in the service of the Marchese, not knowing how urgently I might yet require his assistance in that house.

You cannot but remember my coming into your chamber at Q—, the dress I wore on that evening, and what passed between us. Marco had informed me that I was become much thinner than my sister, and I felt alarmed at exposing my person to you for the first time, lest the accurate observation of one so passionately enamoured as yourself, should discover the deceit I was practising. I accordingly procured the habit of a youth, I thought that any slight change of person you might discern would then be attributed by you to the change of dress, and with a trembling heart I entered the apartment where the first fair trial of the strength of the resemblance between myself and my sister was to be made; for at our first interview, you must well remember, that you saw my face only for a moment as I raised my mask, and then too by the uncertain light of the moon.

High did my heart beat with rapture, at the excellence with which my deceit passed upon you, and when I had interested your heart in my pretended calamities; and wound your passion to the expectation of a renewal of pleasure, I left you, the more securely to bind you mine in the end.

My

My intercourse with the world had taught me the heart of man, and I had learnt that when the value of any pleasure is once known, the surest method of continuing it in estimation, is to let it be tasted no more.

After having warmed your passions, the next step that seemed to promise me any advantage from knowing you, was to excite your compassion; for this purpose I contrived to throw myself before you in the wretched state from which you rescued me at Rome. I perceived that I now had you in my power, and you now well know how artfully I used it, in contriving to get myself transported by you to England.

I now conceived my end to be accomplished, for I had now assumed that grace of outward modesty for which you first admired my sister. I plainly saw that your passion for me had suffered no abatement, though you endeavoured to smother it, from delicacy to my supposed misery; and I anticipated with glory the moment when I should tell you that the Marchese was dead, and myself a widow: I feared nothing from my refusing to tell you the mystery in which I was wrapt; I was well convinced that a man in love suffers no impediments to stand in his way, when the object of his passion is attainable.

But my hopes met a damp, when you mentioned to me Margareta, and I gathered from your words, though they never actually declared such a meaning, that she was the woman whom you intended to make your wife. I was some time at a loss how to act. At length I resolved, whenever you should declare your intention of espousing her, to go to her, throw myself upon my knees before her, and tell her a story of the delusions which my honour and happiness had suffered from your promises; which I trusted would make her,

her, if her heart was really as amiable as you had so often described it, refuse to marry you herself, when she considered you in justice the husband of another woman.

Thus determined, what astonishment seized me on that morning on which I met you walking in Melford park, and you informed me, that if Margareta had not broken her arm, she would, at that very hour, have become the wife of Edward Wallace! "Of Edward Wallace!" repeated my astonished heart. I knew not what to think, what to believe, or what to hope. I determined to sound your feelings; and I discovered by only gently probing them, that you had sacrificed your own happiness to that of Margareta.—After this you came frequently to my cottage, and I plainly perceived that your passion for me had lost no hold in your breast. Now it was that I forged the letter which I brought to you on the evening of your return from your estates in —, the letter which told you that the Marchese di Marvaldi, my supposed husband, was dead; and when I left you, I purposely dropped a paper which appeared to have been torn from that letter, and which was so planned as to cause you to believe it written by Bernardo, advising me not to confess to you the love that I bore for you.

My stratagem answered the purpose for which I had devised it; your first plan of happiness being disappointed, you seized the next that had offered itself to you, in the honourable possession of my person; and I became your wife—the wife of a man equal in rank to Albert di Marvaldi. I fell upon my knees, and offered my thanksgivings to the demons of revenge!

. This manuscript I have long been preparing for you. This night I have thus far concluded it—this dreadful night, in which you have

have heard me utter "murder" in my prayers, and questioned me upon it.

This night I have, for the first time in a long while, attempted to pray. You have not been forgotten in my orisons. I have for these few days past been strangely moved, and no wonder that it should be so; but my vow shall be kept.—I prayed; I ventured to add blasphemy to my crime, by asking pardon for the murder yet uncommitted.—My reason is again awake, and I know that pardon is not to be hoped for.

Though I dare not pray again, it cannot add to my criminality to wish that God may bless you, that he may reward you for the misapplied tenderness which you have bestowed on the most infamous, most wronged, and most miserable of his created beings.

I shall once more add a few lines to what I have already written.

. For the last time I hold a pen in my hand; we are now only a few leagues from Venice, and then—I fall into the pit of everlasting torture. I have dispatched a courier to Venice with a note to Bernardo, containing these words:

"My worthy, my faithful old friend Bernardo, congratulate me, be happy with me;—I am the wife of Sir Charles Melford; in a few hours I shall arrive in Venice. I shall immediately announce to you my arrival, and then come to the Pallazo di Marvaldi, and seal a bond of eternal friendship with Albert and my sister. I have seen all my errors, and am reclaimed. When I shall have seen the Marchese and Marchesa, all my desires in this life will be complete. Grant me one petition, and Heaven bless you for ever;—do not tell either to my brother or my sister my good fortune or my arrival in Italy; I wish to surprise them

them by my presence. I entreat you to comply with my request, it is the most solemn one you will ever receive from

“ANTONIA MELFORD.”

“In a few hours you may expect a summons to visit me at the hotel of the Virgin.”

By the same courier I have sent a packet, containing all the money I possessed, as my last reward to Marco.

I have now only two more actions to perform in this world:—to drink the draught of eternal sleep,—then—to strike the blow of revenge!

Farewell, Sir Charles; I do not ask you to pray for me, or to forgive me; if it is possible, forget me!

Vain world, farewell; I do not cast one sigh upon you at parting.

Now then my heart is strong to execute my purpose—but oh my head is—folly! I will not think!—I will not dread the hereafter!—It is but one effort, and apprehension will then be lost in confirmed torture!

I go!—Farewell for ever!

Now, George, I do not ask you whether you have ever known so infamous a fiend as Antonia; I only question you whether you have ever known so pitiable a wretch as Charles Melford?

But I will spare comments, for you must know as well as well as myself what my thoughts must be, and endeavour to continue my narrative.

Towards evening my power of reflection began to return; and when Bernardo came to visit me, which he did with great kindness, I learnt that the unhappy Laura was still senseless, that her faintings had continued without intermission, and that she was incapable of being soothed or reasoned with. Paulina, he said, was in a state of grief little less severe than her mother, and that the Mar-

quis de Belleterre was acting towards both the affectionate office of soother and consoler. I besought Bernardo, when their feelings would permit them to attend to any subject but that of their sorrows, to say whatever he could devise to them to exculpate me from sharing in their opinion any part of Antonio's baseness. I explained to him the truth of all that had passed, and I besought him to relate it in my name.

He said the Marquis de Belleterre intended to visit me on the following morning; I told him that I should at an early hour leave Venice, that I could not bear to be seen by any one in it, after what had that day happened, much less by any one interested in the transactions of it.

"It will not then," he rejoined, "increase your inclination to see the Marquis, if I tell you that he has about a month gained the consent of my poor murdered master to marry the dear lady Paulina."

"May God make them happy!" I exclaimed.

"Amen," replied Bernardo. "The poor Marchese saw that his daughter would never be happy without him, and thus agreed to their union."

"Be sure," said I, "you do not forget to repeat what I have related to you to those concerned in the event which the strange occurrences of my unhappy life have assisted to produce."

"Indeed I will not," replied he, "for I am sure you are innocent."

"And," I went on, "promise very soon to write to me in England a strict account of the health and happiness of those I leave behind me here."

"If the young Marquis does not take the office upon himself, I will certainly have the honour of executing your commands," he answered; "but," continued he, "I wish you would stay in Venice only till you have seen him once."

"Impossible!"

"Impossible!" I exclaimed; "I cannot bear to hear the repetition of those horrid events."

"I am sure you will not for some time be able to think of any thing else," he returned.

"And therefore," replied I, "I wish it were no sin to pray for suspension of faculty."

"Try to sleep," said Bernardo.

"That," I returned, "is but to tantalize myself with the shadow of death, and to wake with the powers of thought refreshed and invigorated."

Bernardo sighed.

I wished to be alone, therefore said, "I will however take your advice and go to bed; remember my request. Farewell, and many thanks for your concern about me."

"I shall remember to write to you, and soon," he answered; "Heaven restore you, sir, to peace and happiness." The tears started into his eyes, and he left the room.

I passed the night certainly in bed, but I did not enjoy a moment's oblivion of this world's anxieties. The hours were spent in reading the manuscript of Antonia, and in indulging thoughts baneful to the quiet of my heart. With the dawn I rose, called my servant, and ordered him directly to prepare for our departure from Venice.—And when I lost sight of it, I breathed freer than I had done for the last twenty-four hours.

I have been five days in this village, and have been endeavouring once more to calm my harassed spirits: the reciting to you those horrid events which had ruffled them, and transcribing the manuscript of Antonia, have assisted to keep my mind in a state of perturbation; now that task is performed, I hope it may begin to see with less detriment to its tranquillity the visions of enormity which are continually floating before it.

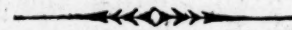
I had forgot to tell you, that prior to my leaving Venice I entrusted Bernardo with a sum of

money sufficient to defray the expences of a decent funeral for the remains of the wretched Antonia: whatever her conduct, she was still my wife, and I conceived it a duty incumbent upon me to give her burial.

I shall to-morrow again set out on my journey towards England, and will write to you again when I reach Lyons. Farewell, dear friend; pray for the unfortunate

CHARLES MELFORD.

Do not write to me at present, for I know not where to bid you direct for me with any probability of receiving your letter.



LETTER LIV.

Sir Charles Melford to George Seymour, Esq.

DEAR GEORGE,

Lyons.

MY heart is much easier than when I wrote to you last; it has required few reasonings with my own mind to convince myself that the loss of such a woman as Antonia is a gain; but then I have lost also—Oh, let not thought turn that way! By this time Margaretta is, I hope, the wife of Edward Wallace. I have marked out my future plan of life; I will return to Melford-house, and my days shall be those of a rich hermit: if you do not understand this phrase of mine, hear its explanation; I forswear all the gaieties, dissipations, follies, and care-hatching pleasures of life; I live, for the time to come, but for others; a frugal plenty shall deck my own board, and a hand of munificence shall be ever held open by me to the children of want: thus I propose to atone for my past inconsiderateness, and by the same conduct to insure myself present and future satisfaction, I am already the father of Margaretta; she shall continue

nue my darling, my best beloved daughter : but every child of misery do I also call to me, that I may soothe its cares by my paternal solicitude. Do not smile, George, and think that my plan is the suggestion of disappointment, which has hung round my heart the cold greybeard that resolves to enjoy only selfish pleasures. I feel, that altho' during my past life I have not acted criminally, I might have acted more strictly right ; and I feel the self-applauding desire of retrieving past errors, in the exercise of present virtues. But enough of this, till I see you ; when you do see me, do not expect to find me the gay, flighty, laughing Charles Melford you have ever accustomed to behold me : prepare yourself to see a man already begun to sink into the old widower, a title under which he is determined to end his days. The greatest pleasure this life could afford me, would be to meet you at Melford-house, on my return to it : if it is possible for you to be there to receive me, let me entreat that you will ; I think I should experience a great relief of my feelings, which are still very painful, in a verbal communication with my friend. Pray let me have your answer to this petition, directed to be left for me at Dover, as, if you agree to go to Melford-house, the anticipation of seeing you there will give me pleasure on the remainder of my journey ; and, I think, if you write to me immediately on your receipt of this, your letter will arrive at Dover much about the time I shall get there. I could say a great deal upon the peculiar hardness of my situation, and the unparalleled cruelty of my destiny in life ; but what avail complaints ?—only ~~to~~ ^{to} weaken the heart and mind of him who utters them ?—Oh, had I attended your admonitions !—Oh, God, could the last year of my life be recalled !—How admirably could we all act our parts on the theatre of life, did we know the catastrophe of the drama, in
which

which we are engaged ! Oh that my last act was performed, and the curtain had fallen upon the ultimate scene of my eventful life !—Adieu, adieu.

CHARLES MELFORD.

LETTER LV.

George Seymour, Esq. to Sir Charles Melford.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Kirton.

I WILL meet you at Melford-house ; your's is a situation that requires the soothing conversation of a friend, and you shall have the best consolation that my presence is able to afford you. Do not expect from me, that either upon this paper or when we meet I will enter upon a retrospect of the events of your life ; adventures of an unpleasant nature it is better never to repeat, except as lessons of admonition ; and these the words of your last letter convince me you no longer require. Do not either, my dear Charles, too severely accuse yourself ; because all the disappointments you have experienced, and the irregularities you have committed, have originated in yourself : it is one of the mortifications to which human nature is subject, to have the power of looking back, and observing how its actions might have been performed more to its own happiness. Remember also, that this is a state in which perfectness is not to be ; to expect, therefore, to find a man endowed with a mind of that strength which shall altogether restrain him from the commission of error, is to expect to find what will never be experienced in a mortal state. Let these reflections upon the nature of which you are formed, teach you to bear with greater satisfaction such events as have arisen from

from the frailty of that very nature. The human heart has an absolute power in restraining itself from the commission of vice ; but I believe it was never yet found with an absolute power of guarding itself against the commission of accidental foibles ; because, could it do that, it would be perfect, and if perfect, no longer mortal.

I must say a few words upon one point contained in the confessions of Antonia ; I refer to her mention of my father, Sir Robert Seymour. The time of his being abroad, and the cause of his going to the continent, which was that of his sister's ill health, certainly agree with Antonia's account ; but still I know not how to credit his having brought to England an illegitimate child ; no provision is made for any such child in his will, and I believe him to have been too generous and too humane to have cast any being who could call him father upon the world. I never even heard a hint of such an event having taken place, and the world is, in general, very ready to bring home such tales to those who ought to be the last to know them. I have also, since the receipt of your letter, written to my brother, Sir Oliver, enquiring whether such an event had been ever known to him ; and he declares himself equally ignorant of it, and even believes the report to be entirely without foundation. I will say no more on the subject when we meet ; for you may rely upon seeing me at Melford-house. My Emma is better both in health and spirits, and insists upon my paying this visit of friendship to you.

How ardently I anticipate our meeting ! How long is it since we have seen each other ! and how many things, when we are once again together, shall we find to say, which either have not occurred to us at the moment of our correspondence, or else have been superseded by events more immediately present to us, or again which may not
have

have been thought of sufficient interest to communicate to paper, but about which it may afford us satisfaction to converse !

Farewell for a while : yours ever,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.



LETTER LVI.

George Seymour Esq. to Mrs. Seymour.

MY DEAR EMMA,

Melford-house, Rutlandshire.

I AM arrived safe at the end of my journey ; but Sir Charles is not yet here, nor is expected till tomorrow noon.

I have not seen Seymour-hall, where I first received the light, since my return from America ; it is but twelve miles distant from this place, so I shall employ the present day in going to take a peep at it : I shall not the less enjoy the sight of its well and long-known features, because its only inhabitants at this time are the old gardener and his wife. I shall conclude my letter when I return from my ride, and shall now only just add, that I have, I believe, had a distant view of Sir Charles's protégée, Margaretta Hayton : a woman of an extremely fine figure, and dressed in a style something above the plainness of rusticity, passed thro' the park at a short distance from the house, just after I had entered it ; I saw only her back, as she was leaving the park. I have enquired, and find that the marriage between her and Edward Wallis has not yet taken place : I wish, for the sake of my friend, that it had. Adieu till the evening.

Ten o'clock in the evening.

DURING my ride my thoughts continued to dwell upon Margaretta's marriage : I felt much
pain

pain that it was not already solemnized ; I knew that to find her single at his return, would heap an additional trial upon the many conflicts which Sir Charles had already undergone, and I determined, immediately on my return to Melford-house, to go and introduce myself at Briar-bank farm, and use my endeavours for having the ceremony take place in the morning before Sir Charles should arrive.

With this resolution I vaulted from my horse at the door of Melford-house ; but no sooner had I dismounted, than the old housekeeper came running out to me. I advanced a few steps to meet her, and she said, " Mrs. Wallace, sir, whose son keeps the manor-farm, has been here some time waiting your return, and she desires me to say, that she should consider herself extremely obliged if you would honour her with a few moments' conversation." I immediately desired to be shown to her ; the house-keeper requested me to go into the dining-room, and added, that Mrs. Wallace would come to me directly.

I had scarcely taken a couple of turns about the room before the door opened to admit a very respectably dressed and venerable looking woman of about sixty ; as she entered she curtsied to me, and I said, " I presume I have the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Wallace ?"—" Yes, sir," she returned, " my name is Wallace." I drew a chair towards her, but she remained standing, and continued speaking. " I have understood, sir, that you are Mr. Seymour, the very intimate and respected friend of Sir Charles Melford."—" I am," was my reply. " It is on his account, sir, that I have taken the liberty of asking a short conversation with you." I begged her to sit down, and took a chair near her. Mrs. Wallace then continued : " Knowing the terms of friendship which subsist between you, sir, and Sir Charles,

I judge that you are well acquainted with all that he has done for me, for my son, and for the dear girl Margaretta."—"Perfectly so," I replied.—
 "Excellent man!" exclaimed Mrs. Wallace, and the tears began to steal down her cheeks.—
 In a few seconds she went on: "You have certainly heard that Margaretta received from Sir Charles, before the accident which befel her arm—dear child!—his consent to marry my son Edward, and a dower of five thousand pounds."—
 "He informed me of these circumstances," I answered. "Not long after this act of his great benevolence," returned Mrs. Wallace, "we all rejoiced at the completion of his own happiness; for news came to the Italian lady, whom he had some time maintained and protected at the Lawn-cottage, that her husband was dead, and Sir Charles left England along with her, telling my son that they should be married in France, and then proceed to Venice, in order to bring back with them to England the lady's only daughter."
 "All this is true," said I; "and I have been made acquainted with it from Sir Charles himself."
 "Of that I had no doubt," returned Mrs. Wallace; "but it was of consequence that I should be sure you knew all these particulars before I began to explain to you the strange circumstance that brings me now before you. Pray, sir," she continued, after a short pause, "are you not come hither to meet Sir Charles, who is every hour expected to return from abroad?"—"I am."
 "And," returned Mrs. Wallace, "does not his lady come with him?" I hesitated a moment what to reply, and Mrs. Wallace exclaimed, "Is it then indeed true, that the lady whom we here knew by the title of the Marchesa is no more?"—"She is certainly dead," I returned.—
 "Let me entreat you, Mr. Seymour," rejoined Mrs. Wallace, "as you value the peace of an unhappy

happy girl, and your friend Sir Charles, to tell me what you know of this mysterious affair!" I still knew not what to answer; I was uncertain how much of his extraordinary fate Sir Charles would be willing to have exposed, even to Mrs. Wallace. I, therefore, was beginning to say, "I must request you to tell me——" when she relieved my embarrassment, by drawing from her pocket a letter, which she put into my hand, saying, "Read that paper, Mr. Seymour; I can no longer delay to show it to you; and then tell me whether we have not all reason to be unhappy." She burst into tears, and turned from me.

The letter which Mrs. Wallace had given me bore the mark of a foreign post, and was directed to Margaretta. I unfolded it, and read the following words:

"You receive this letter from one whom you have lately known by the name of the Marchesa Laura: Antonia she *is*, and *now* the wife of Sir Charles Melford; but to-morrow she *dies*; mark then her last words; Sir Charles Melford married Antonia because he would not interrupt the happiness of Margaretta and Edward Wallace although he had intended to make Margaretta his own wife! And, oh, execute faithful her dying command. Do not, Margaretta, marry Edward Wallace, but become the wife of Sir Charles Melford, your benefactor, your father, your lover, and repair to him the wrongs done to him by

"ANTONIA."

What was my consternation on reading these words! I read them again and again, yet could hardly credit my senses, nor did I know how to account for their having been written, except I could bring myself to believe that a wretch like Antonia could feel remorse for her conduct towards Sir Charles, in making him the innocent instrument of her guilty vow, and, in a moment
of

of incoherent gratitude and repentance, had written this letter, with the hope of bringing him an ultimate reward.

“What is Margareta’s opinion of this letter?” I said, addressing Mrs. Wallace. “She is unable to form one,” returned the good woman;—“sometimes she believes what it avers, and sometimes discredits it; she is, however, resolved to learn the truth, at least not to marry at all till she does discover it; and should it be that Sir Charles has made any sacrifice on her account——” She paused a moment, then added, “Should it be so, sir, even I, who am Edward’s mother, must think her right, in making her benefactor’s happiness her first consideration.” I did not speak. “Ah, sir,” continued Mrs. Wallace, “you say nothing, and I fear your silence only proves the truth of this letter. Oh, how worthy, how excellent a man is Sir Charles! We thought ourselves very wise in finding out that he had been crossed in love, at the time he refused to be present at Margareta’s wedding; little indeed did we think that her he loved was so near us, and and we, as I may—we, to all of whom he had been more than benevolence itself, that we were the persons to mar his happiness: oh, why did we not know this long ago!—“There was the fault!” I exclaimed. “It is then all true, as I feared it was,” said Mrs. Wallace catching her determination from my words. I was obliged to confess what she had already read on my countenance; indeed I saw no use in concealing the truth, since it was evident, from what Mrs. Wallace had said, that Margareta would force the confession from Sir Charles immediately on his return. “Poor Edward!” sighed out Mrs. Wallace; “but, praised be Heaven! he has a noble heart, and much as it may be wrung by the loss of Margareta, I am sure he would rather be
unhappy

unhappy himself, than make Sir Charles so, or tempt Margareta to do an ungrateful action to her benefactor, out of her love for him."

I was meanwhile walking up and down the room in thought.

"Poor Sir Charles!" cried Mrs. Wallace, "it is plain enough now why he could not bear to see my Edward by his bed-side, when he had cut his temple with the glass. I thought at the time that his heart was more hurt than his head: and then, that he should marry that Italian woman! Pray, sir, tell me what was her death, that she knew before-hand that she should die on the morrow, as she says in her letter?"

In as few words as the heads of Antonio's story could be conveyed, I told it to Mrs. Wallace.—When I had concluded it, she said, "It would be injustice for Margareta to be my Edward's; he has done nothing to deserve her; what has not Sir Charles suffered!"

A few minutes' silence again ensued: during the pause I had wound up my thoughts to the resolution of acting, and said, "Mrs. Wallace, do you think Margareta will have any objection to seeing me?"—"Impossible, sir, that she can," returned Mrs. Wallace. "Will you have the goodness to conduct me to Briar-bank farm, and introduce me to her?" Mrs. Wallace immediately consented, and we set out.

When we arrived at the farm-house, which is very neat, and placed at the extremity of an inviting garden, we were met at the entrance by a handsome young man of about two or three and twenty, whom Mrs. Wallace acquainted me was her son. His dress bespoke that he was a farmer; but there was an ease and proper confidence in his manner, that shewed him to be acquainted with society. He conducted us into a parlour, where, in the midst of all that can give the idea of com-
fort

fort, sat Margaretta : and here I must depart from my narrative, to describe my new acquaintance Margaretta. It was indeed the same female figure I had so much admired in the morning.— She now rose from her seat with that complaisant smile painted on her cheeks which is called up to welcome a stranger, in whose favour we are prepossessed, because he is introduced to us by those whom we esteem. This was just the idea which Margaretta's first reception of myself gave me, and I think I never beheld a person and figure of more interest blended together. Her stature is rather more than the middle size, but it is striking, because all its parts are well proportioned, and that there is no feature which can mock another for its want of assistance in forming the beauty of the whole, or envy it for its superior grace : her skin is sufficiently white to be delicate, and yet not so sickly alabastic as to deny the rosy blush of the blood to peep through its transparency : her hair, in being nearly black, is of the exact colour which displays to advantage the neck on which it falls ; her face is just enough upon the round to have that exquisite smile of good-nature constantly playing upon it, which, on an oval countenance, is scarcely ever raised, without a sneer or a wrinkle ; her eyes neither dart flames of love nor dangers of censure, but they sparkle with animation and good-sense ; her nose is not Grecian it is beautifully suited to the proportion of her face ; and her lips must be exquisite, for they are only employed in speaking the words of good-nature and truth.

Some men would have feared to give their wives such an exalted description of any woman. I think it the highest compliment I can pay to my Emma ; because, in showing that I do not hesitate to speak my sentiments freely of an absent woman, I declare that I think you without that failing which every married woman of the present

age cannot boast herself free from——jealousy. —I know that I have no cause to fear it from you, and that you have too much good sense to harbour such a thorn to your peace, even if you were defective in personal charms, which is the usual cause that gives rise to the feeling in other women.

At our entrance Mrs. Wallace said, “Margaretta, my love, this is Mr. Seymour, the intimate friend of Sir Charles, the gentleman from whose lady you have had the pleasure of receiving so many verses, who now does you the honour of calling upon you.”

After some conversation had passed upon indifferent subjects, I began that of which my mind was full. I first apologized to Margaretta for speaking to her on so delicate a subject, as that of her marriage, while I was as yet almost a total stranger to her, except by name: I urged, in my excuse, my intimacy with Sir Charles, and the interest I took in his happiness, which, I told her, alone prompted me to request her attention to the subject upon which I was going to speak and advise.

She replied, that, as the friend of Sir Charles Melford, she was happy in listening to whatever I might wish to say, and should consider herself grateful to me for the suggestion of any plan by which she might promote his felicity. “It has,” I said, “been the earnest and particular wish of Sir Charles Melford, repeatedly expressed to me in the letters which I have lately received from him, that he should, at his return, find you the wife of Edward Wallace. I know that when he arrives it will give him much pain to see you single; to-morrow noon he reaches Melford-house; it is still possible to spare him what, from his own words, he will certainly feel, at being informed that the marriage is yet unperformed. Permit me then, in the name of his happiness, to beg of you to consent that your union with Edward Wallace may take place to-morrow morning.”

Margaretta became very much agitated, but did not answer. Edward Wallace also remained silent. After a short pause I said, "I hope you will consent."

"That letter, that letter!" exclaimed Mrs. Wallace.

"Sir Charles," I replied, "does not know it ever to have been written."

"But I do!" exclaimed Margaretta, through her tears; "and it points out to me, that I may, in the very performance of Sir Charles Melford's wish, which is dictated by his desire of my happiness, prove myself the most ungrateful, the most unfeeling of dependants."

"God forbid!" cried Mrs. Wallace with up-raised hands.

"Forbid what, my dear mother?" asked Edward Wallace hesitatingly.

"That Margaretta should be your wife," returned Mrs. Wallace. "No, child, that must never be; all that the letter says is true—every word of it true; and I trust you will both have resolution to do your duty."

The most affecting scene I ever beheld ensued; there was not an eye present without a tear, and the different emotions of virtuous sorrow which beamed through them was irresistably touching to my heart.

After a few minutes I again spoke: "It has," I said, "long been the firm resolve of Sir Charles Melford never to interrupt that happiness which he already conceived to be cemented between Edward Wallace and yourself; and I am well convinced, that no importunity, no private inclination, will ever tempt him to accept your hand, while he knows that to receive it would be to divide two affectionate hearts."

"If this be his resolution," returned Margaretta, "it is my determination, that he shall never

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ver have the pain of seeing another man more favoured by me than himself: I can, and will, at least, live single."

Much more conversation passed on the same topic, but it brought the subject no farther. Margaretta is determined to become the wife of Sir Charles, or never to marry, and I can perceive that her resolution is too firmly taken to be shaken from its purpose by any argument that cannot remove the cause on which it is founded.

How will this perplexity end? Either Sir Charles or Edward Wallace must be positively unhappy in the loss of Margaretta; and I fear, from the sincere friendship and regard which subsists between them, that he who possesses her can, at best, be negatively happy, in thinking that his felicity arises from the disappointment of his friend. Poor Margaretta, how sincerely do I feel for her! I am sure she has the sympathy of your heart, and I wish you were here, that she might enjoy such consolation as your words would give her. How wretched must be her feelings, divided between her affections for a man whom she has for many months past been regarding as her destined husband, and her reverence for him who snatched her from all the misery to which she was on the point of being exposed, as a defenceless orphan!

With how strange circumstances does this world teem! How thankful ought those to be, whose journey through life is not marked with any blacker calamity than those every-day accidents which are inseparable from our existence!

I pray Heaven that this may find you well and happy. Farewel; and believe me your affectionate husband,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

P. S. You shall hear from me again very soon.

LETTER

LETTER LVII.

George Seymour, Esq. to Mrs. Seymour.

Melford-house.

I DID not intend to have written again, my dear Emma, till after the arrival of my friend, but I have had a little adventure this morning, and take up my pen to relate it to you whilst at breakfast.

About two hours ago I strolled into the park, and my wanderings led me towards the gate which opens upon the high road. A drove of sheep was passing, and I stood some time observing them; I was going to turn away from the gate, when a man with a wooden leg came towards it, and pulled off his hat, as a preface to what he was going to say; his coat was a tattered regimental, and the rest of his apparel was but in a shabby condition. "Pray can your honour tell me where such a place as Briar-bank farm is to be found?" he asked. "The farm-house stands on the other side of the road," I answered; "you may see it a few yards farther on."—"Thank your honour;"—and he was hobbling away.—"You are a soldier, are you not?" said I. "I have been, your honour, for the last five or six years of my life, but it is all over with me now," returned he, looking down upon his wooden stump. "I suppose you have been in America?" I rejoined. "And warm work I have seen there your honour; I stand the weaker for it by one peg, as your honour observes; I was told often enough before I enlisted, what would come of being a soldier, so what I have lost, is nobody's fault but my own; but I did not mind what folks said to me then.—I did not like driving a plough, and I thought that there was nothing in the world like a

red

red coat, and a musket!"—"Have you changed your opinion?" I asked. "The blow of a cannon ball, your honour," he returned "makes the fondest of fighting feel sick of the business; and let a poor soldier be ever so well done by, the best care that can be taken of him when he's wounded in a foreign country, and battles going forward every day, is not good enough to make him wish for another bout of such field-fare; however, I don't mean to complain, your honour; I am only just speaking of what I think, and no one can say of me, that I did not do my duty to the best of my power when I was in the field." I smiled, and he went on: "I dare say if father had been alive to have seen me now—but he is dead, God rest his soul!—he would have said this here bit of a tree to stump about upon was a punishment for my bad ways when I was a boy, and for not minding my work, and running away from him to Oakham, and enlisting, and the like of that."—"Then you were born in this county?"—"Oh, Lord love you, ay, not above a dozen miles from where we now stand."—"How long have you been returned from America?"—"Only about a couple of months, your honour; I could not travel before, because I was not well enough to be fitted with this prop. I have been travelling about here in this neighbourhood for several days to find a sister of mine, and now I find she's got to live under the bounty of some great man or other at the farm I am asking my way to; perhaps your honour is the gentleman."—"No, indeed, "I am not," I replied; "but what is your sister's name?"—"Margaretta Hayton, your honour,"—he answered; "and I am Tom Hayton, as sad a dog as ever breathed, when I was in these parts before, your honour, but I am mended now; and I hope sister will be glad to see me, when she finds

finds I have had a blow to call my senses to reason;" and again he cast a significant look upon his wooden leg. "Your sister is well," said I, "and at the house where you expect to find her."—"Thank Heaven," he replied; "I had heard as much, your honour, but I am glad to hear it again; she was always a good girl, and used to take my part with father. Thank your honour for showing me the way. Good-morning to your honour:" and away he hobbled.

When Sir Charles first wrote to me an account of his having taken Margaretta under his protection, whilst I was in America, I recollect his mentioning that she had a brother then in the army, who had been a rustic profligate: that after he had caused his father much distress, and reduced him to great pecuniary embarrassments, he had left him, and enlisted with a recruiting party at Oakham fair. It was then five years since they had heard of him at all, and [they supposed him dead. It was Sir Charles Melford's resolution, if ever he should return reclaimed, to provide for him. And it gives me pleasure, from the interest I feel in whatever relates to his sister's comfort, that from the short conversation I have had with him this morning, his amendment seems already to have taken place. He appears about six or seven years older than Margaretta, and does not at all resemble her in person; his eyes are light, and his hair inclining to a flaxen. As different you will say in person as in mind and condition. How strange a brother for Margaretta to receive! But her heart is too amiable to suffer her to disregard one allied to her by the nearest ties of blood, because his mind is less cultivated, and his person more hardened.

I hear the wheels of a carriage upon the gravel road leading to the house; a post-chaise appears in sight; it must be my long absent friend: farewell

wel now, my dearest Emma, I will wrire again
to-morrow. Your affectionately,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

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LETTER LVIII.

George Seymour, Esq. to Mrs. Seymour.

Melford-house.

I NEED not describe to my dearest Emma how great the ecstasy that blessed the few first hours of meeting between two friends who had been so long separated as Sir Charles and myself. He is, upon the whole, in rather better spirits than I expected to find him; but his person is materially altered. He, whose countenance once possessed all that fire with which eyes sparkling from the intelligence of the mind, cheeks painted by the glow of health, and lips dimpled with the smiles of ease and good-nature, can light up to advantage a regular set of features, now looks but to observe, and not to attract observation; and smiles so seldom and so faintly, that it is almost a doubt when he does smile whether pain or pleasure agitates his pale cheeks.

This is the fatal consequence of desiring too much happiness!—this is the exemplary effect of being too confident in our own strength, and weakly believing, that whatever end we may have in view can at any time be accomplished; false idea! there is only one method of securing virtuous happiness, and only one moment of seizing upon it. This life is too short to admit of procrastination in virtue, and virtue alone can be true happiness.

You will smile at my moralizing, but indeed the scene in which I am living is enough to convert a merrier spirit than mine into a crying philosopher.

I had considered how wrong it would be, that Sir Charles should abruptly be told of Antonia's letter to Margaretta, I therefore gradually disclosed to him its contents, and what had since passed between Margaretta and myself at Briar-bank farm.

"Monster of iniquity!" he exclaimed; "was it not enough for her to break the peace of my mind, but she must also stab the happiness of the innocent Margaretta!"

I besought him to compose his spirits, and to reflect that Antonia had written the letter with the design of repairing to him that happiness which she considered herself to have injured. "Did she not know" he cried, "that Margaretta's happiness was dearer to me than my own!"—he paused a moment, then added, "Seymour, my friend, will you perform one act of kindness for the unhappy man before you?"—"You know my wish to serve you," I said; "speak what you desire."—"Go," he returned, "to Briar-bank farm, prevent Margaretta from coming to see me; tell her that I cannot, will not, admit her to my presence till she is the wife of Edward Wallace; tell her that I shall then glory to hold her to the bosom of her father: tell her also to recollect, that having already made myself her father, I cannot be her husband; and remind her that he has long ago promised to obey me as her father."

When he had spoken these words, he covered his face with his hands. I heard a sigh of agony struggling on his lips, and I saw the tears wetting his fingers. This conversation took place not many hours after his arrival. When I saw that he had sufficiently recovered his composure to listen to me, I said, "Sir Charles, let me entreat you to defer this matter, at least till to-morrow."—"Why defer it," he exclaimed; "indeed it is better done, for my determination shall not alter"

—"I do

—“I do not suppose it will,” I answered; “but were I to go to the farm on the errand you desire, I am sure in this one instance Margareta would not obey your request; she has declared, that you shall never see another man more favoured by her than yourself. Perhaps reflection may devise some better method of obtaining her consent to your wish.”—“No, no,” cried he, “I cannot bear to see her, till she is married; you must go; say I command her to become the wife of Ed-Wallace.”

I was convinced this message would not produce its desired issue, and therefore repeated, “Pray defer sending me, if it be only till to-morrow.”—“Will you promise me then,” he said, “by our friendship, to go to-morrow, if I desire it?”—“I will,” was my answer. He then requested me to write a note to Margareta in his name, to say that he was fatigued by his journey, otherwise not well, and unable to receive visitors, and therefore begged for the present not to see any one from the farm. When I had written it, a servant was immediately dispatched with it.

What will be the end of this strange complication of accidents! I wish something were decided upon, as I think it would be for the happiness of all who are concerned in it. It is now midnight; Sir Charles is gone to his chamber; I have just parted from him, and he still continues resolved that I shall go to the farm in the morning. I have racked my brain in vain to devise some plan which might soften the perplexities of this dilemma. It is so unparalleled an instance amongst the strange accidents with which life abounds, that I have no precedent to draw an argument from. Good-night.

Eleven in the morning.

Sir Charles Melford's determination still continues; he declares that his feelings are this morning more miserable than ever, and says that nothing

thing can relieve the agony he is suffering but my going to Margaretta, and prevailing upon her to become immediately the wife of Edward Wallace. I go, because my friend asks it, but I am well aware that my intercession will not in this particular serve him.

Farewell; to-morrow you shall know the result of my visit.—Yours, with the sincerest affection,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

LETTER LIX.

George Seymour, Esq. to Mrs. Seymour.

MY DEAREST EMMA,

Melford-house.

I HAVE a discovery to relate to you, for which I hardly know how to compose my spirits. My dear friend Sir Charles will I hope at last be happy. Margaretta too will be happy with Edward Wallace, and without interfering with the felicity of her benefactor. I am sure I have raised your astonishment to a pitch that requires immediate gratification, but you must pardon me if I insist upon giving you my account regularly.

You know that I yesterday concluded my letter by telling you that I was that very hour going to Briar-bank farm, to carry to Margaretta Sir Charles Melford's commands for her immediately to become the wife of Edward Wallace. In my way thither I met Edward Wallace; I told him whither I was going, though I did not say upon what business, and he turned back with me. On our arrival at the farm, we found Margaretta, her brother Thomas, and Mrs. Wallace, seated round a table. Margaretta had an open letter in her hand, her faculties seemed absorbed in thought, and the countenance of both Mrs. Wallace and Thomas Hayton expressed the greatest surprise. When

we

we entered, Thomas alone rose to receive us; Edward and myself was equally struck with the appearance of the females, and he directly asked an explanation of the astonishment which was portrayed on their faces.

"Oh, my dear boy, cried Mrs. Wallace—
"Oh, Mr. Seymour, the strangest discovery has been just made that ever came to light!—Margaretta is not the child of those who passed for her parents!"

Our astonishment was now excited, and we could only ask further explanation on the subject.

Mrs. Wallace proceeded by saying, that after the death of old Hayton, Margaretta had found in a drawer in the house a letter thus directed: "If Margaretta ever sees Thomas Hayton again, this paper is immediately to be read by her in his presence; if she hears of his death, she is directly to open it herself." "The letter now in Margaretta's hand," she continued, "was the very one to which she was alluding, and that its contents were most extraordinary indeed."

Edward Wallace desired Margaretta to read it aloud; she did not answer him, but put the letter into his hand.

"May Mr. Seymour hear its contents?" Edward whispered her.

"He is the friend of my benefactor," she returned, "and I have no secret from him."

"Read it out," said Mrs. Wallace, "for we have hardly heard it ourselves, Margaretta had not quite finished it when you came in."

Edward complied with her request, and read these words:

"MY DEAR MARGARETTA,

I am but a poor hand at writing, but I cannot forbear penning these few lines to tell you that you are not my child, as I think it may be of use to you some time or other to know it. I lay-in of a

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daughter

daughter who would, as nearly as I can guess, have been exactly your own age had she lived, but she died in the course of the month, and I was persuaded by the gentleman who said he was your father, to take you and bring you up as my own. My husband knows nothing of your not being his child, for I feared to tell him, lest he should grudge to maintain you ; and we have never any thing to expect from your father, for he died very soon indeed after he placed you under my care, and so did not live to perform the many promises he had made to me for bringing you up. When I am on my death-bed, which I think from my sad health is not far off, I shall entrust this secret to my husband, and tell him what is in this paper ; but I shall make him promise not to tell you what is in this letter during his life-time, lest you should not love him so well as you have done. I have directed that you should open it in the presence of my son Thomas, that you may have somebody to support you under the surprise of this discovery ; and, whatever Tom's other faults may have been, he has been always dearly fond of you ; and oh how happy should I die if I thought you would ever condescend to become his wife ! but that I must not expect from one who is the daughter of such a father, as you came of. But now I have not told you who your father is. I cannot tell whether you would like to hear it, so I have written your father's name, and the only one by which you were christened, in the little piece of paper that you will find sealed up in this letter ; by which I have left to your own choice, to learn who was your father, or not. God bless you, my dear child, and pray do not think ill of me for having kept this secret thus long from you, for I have been afraid to tell both my husband and you ; if I have done wrong, I have meant for the best, so pray give me your
pardon.

pardon. I am, my dear child, your very well wisher.

"MARY HAYTON."

"Have you opened the paper," asked Edward Wallace, "which is said to have been inclosed in this letter, and to contain the names of yourself and your father?"

"No, I have not," said Margaretta, pointing to it, as it lay on the table.

"But you certainly intend it," rejoined Edward Wallace.

"I cannot open it myself," she answered; then after a pause added, "Do you open it."

Edward hesitated; it seemed to be a task for which he felt himself unfit.

"I wish it were unclosed," said Margaretta, "I feel miserable till I know its contents."

Still Edward did not offer to take it from the table.

"Shall I break the seal?" I said.

"Pray do, Mr. Seymour," she answered.

I tore open the paper; and what words think you, Emma, met my eyes? Prepare yourself for wonder; they were:—"Sir Robert Seymour was your father.—*Æmia* is your christian name."

I could not utter the contents; the paper fell from my hands; I threw myself upon the neck of Margaretta, and, with the tenderness I really felt for her, hailed her sister! she neither met nor repressed my embrace; she fixed her eyes on mine for some moments in mute enquiry, at length,

"Sister!" she repeated, "your sister?"

"Sister!" I returned with emphasis; "you are the daughter of Sir Robert Seymour, my father!"

"If this be true," said Margaretta, "why have I not been publicly acknowledged as his child?"

"Because," I replied, "you were not born in wedlock."—"and will you," she returned—"you whose birth was legitimate, call an unfortunate being like myself sister?"—"Perish," I cried,

"those base frivolities, encouraged only by the proud

proud and ignorant, which would have any distance acknowledged between the children of the same parent!" I again pressed her to my heart, and she burst into tears.

When sufficiently recovered to gain her utterance, "Who was my mother?—Is she still alive?" Margaretta asked. "No," I replied, "she is not alive." Margaretta sighed; then said, "since you can so immediately answer to the death of my mother, to what am I to attribute your not having till this moment known me to be what I am now proved?"—"It is so short a time," I returned, "since I first heard it hinted, that my father had been the parent of any child besides my brother and myself, that, to confess the truth, I did not give the story credit."—"What then has now gained your faith to it?" asked Margaretta eagerly. "The name by which you were baptised," I replied. Margaretta snatched up the paper from the table, and read, "*Æmilia* :—Was this the name of my mother?" she asked. "No," I returned. "Tell me who my mother was," she rejoined. "Prepare yourself with fortitude," I said, "to hear a surprise which cannot be a pleasant one."—"Proceed I entreat you," she said. "Your mother," I replied, "was—*Antonia*."—"The wife of Sir Charles Melford?" cried, Margaretta. "The same," I answered. "Oh" exclaimed Margaretta, again bursting into tears, "why do I know myself the child of a murderers!"—"Even in this discovery," I returned, "Heaven brings a reward to your virtue; religion now forbids your union with Sir Charles, and there is no longer any impediment existing to your happiness with Edward Wallace."

"Oh, my dear boy!—oh, my dear children!" exclaimed Mrs. Wallace, "how good is God to you! may you ever be happy for ever and ever!"

Edward

Edward Wallace approached towards Margaretta; "Take her hand," said I, "at that of a brother's, who is proud to put it into your's." I then turned from them for a few moments, that their joy might flow without restraint.

When the first emotion arising from this discovery had subsided, I explained to Margaretta such particulars of her birth as the confessions of Antonia had made me acquainted with, and also convinced her in a point which she at first seemed to doubt—that Antonia had not known her to be her daughter when she saw her in England.

I farther pointed out to Margaretta, that my father's death had been extremely sudden, and that from this cause undoubtedly had arisen his having left her unprovided for; but that his sons, at least I could answer with certainty for myself, and I believed I could take upon myself, to say as much for my brother, would not on that account shut her out from enjoying a part of that property of which her father had died possessed.

For myself, I was all satisfaction at an occurrence which rescued Sir Charles from the dilemma in which he was living. Margaretta was all joy and surprise, Edward Wallace and his mother all ecstasy; and Thomas Hayton thus expressed his sentiments; rising and shaking the hand of his ci-devant sister, he said, "Well, Miss Margaretta, or Emilia, whatever your name be now, I wish you joy with all my heart, that you have found yourself out to be the child of a better father than I come of, that is to say, in the way of riches, for my dad was as honest as the best in the land; as to what mother says in her letter about your being my wife, I assure you I should have liked such winter quarters very well, but you are better disposed of, and so I wish you as happy as a long life and plenty of children can make you."

I now returned to Melford-house to make the

important discovery of the morning to Sir Charles. I had borrowed of Emilia (for so I shall in future call my sister) Mrs. Hayton's letter and the paper contained in it. I thought these would speak more to the purpose than all the eloquence I could summon up to my assistance; and accordingly, after a few introductory sentences, I put the papers into his hands.

What passion moved him most strongly on reading them I cannot tell, for he turned to the window as he perused them, and thus avoided my observation.

Having read them, he paced the room for some moments in violent agitation, then throwing himself into a chair, he exclaimed, "Wretch, that I am! I might have been the brother of my friend!" He extended his hand towards me; I took it in mine, and besought him to listen to the many advantages arising from the discovery just made; amongst these I laid the greatest stress upon the impossibility of his now ever being the husband of Emilia; and then pointed out to him, that he would now have nothing to regret in seeing her the wife of Edward Wallace.—Here he burst into a string of exclamations against himself, for not having immediately on the death of his father engaged her affections.—Again I remonstrated, and besought him to forget what had been blameable in his past life, by endeavouring to create some happiness for his future days. In a short time he began to listen to me with composure, and before the evening I had softened down his feelings into a state of comparative happiness. "I will endeavour, he said, "to forget the past, I will, in future, remember only that Margaretta (for I must still call her by that name) is my daughter, and your sister, and that we are to unite our efforts to make her happy."

He then, of his own accord, proposed a walk to
the

the farm, and I of course agreed to it. We found all its inhabitants at home; and three hours were passed there by us, in a manner which gives me reason to hope that, now this discovery with regard to *Æmilia* has struck the decisive blow of his fate, his composure of mind will gradually return, and ultimately bring back with it his former spirits.

You have often heard me remark, that the volateness of my friend's mind was his only fault; and I now trust that his disposition of feeling impressions strongly, but not lastingly, will prove to him a powerful assistant in regaining perfect happiness.

I must now write to my brother Sir Oliver, and inform him of his newly-found sister. Adieu; God bless you, and believe me ever

Your affectionate husband,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

LETTER LX.

George Seymour Esq. to Mrs. Seymour.

MY DEAR EMMA,

Melford-house.

SIR Charles has not relaxed from the pitch of composure to which he had screwed his feelings, when I wrote to you last, and I begin to hope that he now never will. Monday next is fixed for the celebration of *Æmilia*'s nuptials, and I have prevailed upon Sir Charles to promise, that himself and the newly married pair shall, at the very door of the church, begin their journey towards Kirton, and pass a month with us. I know it will give you equal pleasure with myself to entertain my new sister, and old friend. I only write this short letter to give you a hint to make preparations for the reception of the party which is coming to enliven our quiet scenes of domestic retirement.

retirement ; and, as I think it my duty here to devote my time to the amusing of Sir Charles Melford's mind, you must pardon my long adding what, though often repeated, I still feel it impossible to omit saying, that I am your affectionate husband,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

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LETTER LXI.

Bernardo to Sir Charles Melford.

SIR,

Venice.

IN compliance with your request of hearing from me, I have the honour to inform you of such particulars as I know it will be acceptable to you to learn. A few days after your departure from Venice, permission was, with difficulty, obtained from the state for the burial of the unfortunate Antonia ; and then only upon my assertion of her rash action having been the result of lunacy. The unhappy Marchesa Laura, unable to enjoy the society of the world, now deprived of her much-loved husband, has retired for life into a convent, towards which she had always been a large benefactress, and where she trusts to the balm of religion to sooth her mind in this state, and prepare it for happiness in the next. The amiable lady Paulina has, with resolution, bid farewell to her mother ; she is become the wife of the Marquis de Belleterre, and is gone with him into France, as it is her desire never to return to the spot where her worthy father died. The Marquis de Belleterre knows that I am to write to you, and he directs me to say, that nothing but the peculiar affairs to which he has lately been obliged to attend should have prevented him from writing to you himself, but that you shall hear from him as he

he reaches Paris with his bride. He intends to make that city his future residence. For myself, sir, I shall retire upon the savings of my service into the country, and in some obscure cottage end my days in tranquillity. That this letter may find you improved in happiness, and well in health, is the sincere pray of,

Sir, your most obedient humble servant,
BERNARDO.

LETTER LXII.

George Seymour, Esq. to Mrs. Seymour.

Nottingham.

AT length, my dear Emma, my friend's last trial is past: *Æmilia* is the wife of Edward Wallace. We have been upon our journey ever since this morning, and are now stopped to dine at the distance of about twenty-five miles from Melford-house.

The ceremony took place between eight and nine this morning: it was private by the desire of Sir Charles, and we were accordingly attended to church only by Mrs. Wallace and Thomas Hayton. *Æmilia* wept. I love to see the tear that supplicates for happiness drop from the eye of her who stands before the altar of God on this solemn occasion. Sir Charles was violently agitated; but he had promised me that he would not let his feelings subdue his reason, and he faithfully kept his word. To-day he has indeed been the father of my sister, and, I doubt not, will ever continue to love her as a parent.

Immediately on the ceremony being ended, we got into Sir Charles Melford's carriage, which is to convey us to Kirton; and, with many wishes for the happiness and prosperity of those it contained, Mrs. Wallace returned to the farm, and
Thomas

Thomas Hayton to his new dwelling; for Sir Charles has benevolently given to him, for life, the use of the cottage which was inhabited by Antonia during her residence in England, and has kindly settled upon him an annuity of fifty pounds,

Now my Emma will clasp to her bosom, as the sister of her husband, her whom she had wished to know when only the protégée of her husband's friend. Oh, how I anticipate your meeting! *Æmilia* is indeed a most fascinating woman, and Edward has seen enough of life to conduct himself in its refined walks without offending, and, what is still a more rare quality, without affectation. If you knew *Æmilia* it would be enough, to say in his recommendation, that he is her husband; for she must have something more to approve in the man who has her esteem, than the outward part.

I hope the past will now entirely be effaced from the memory of those who have been involved in the misfortunes which it has produced; if it is ever remembered, may it be held up to our children as inculcating this serious lesson, that when the attainment of virtuous happiness is once in our power, it is our duty to receive it with thankfulness as the gift of Heaven; that we sin in deferring it for the sake of any present, but more immaterial pleasure; and that it is the ordination of Providence that the loss of any great good which has once been within our reach, shall be the consequence of our vainly thinking, that because it has been once offered to us, it shall remain securely ours, whenever we choose to receive it.

Adieu: in a couple of days I shall once more embrace you; till then, and ever, God bless you; so prays your affectionate husband,

GEORGE SEYMOUR.

THE END.



